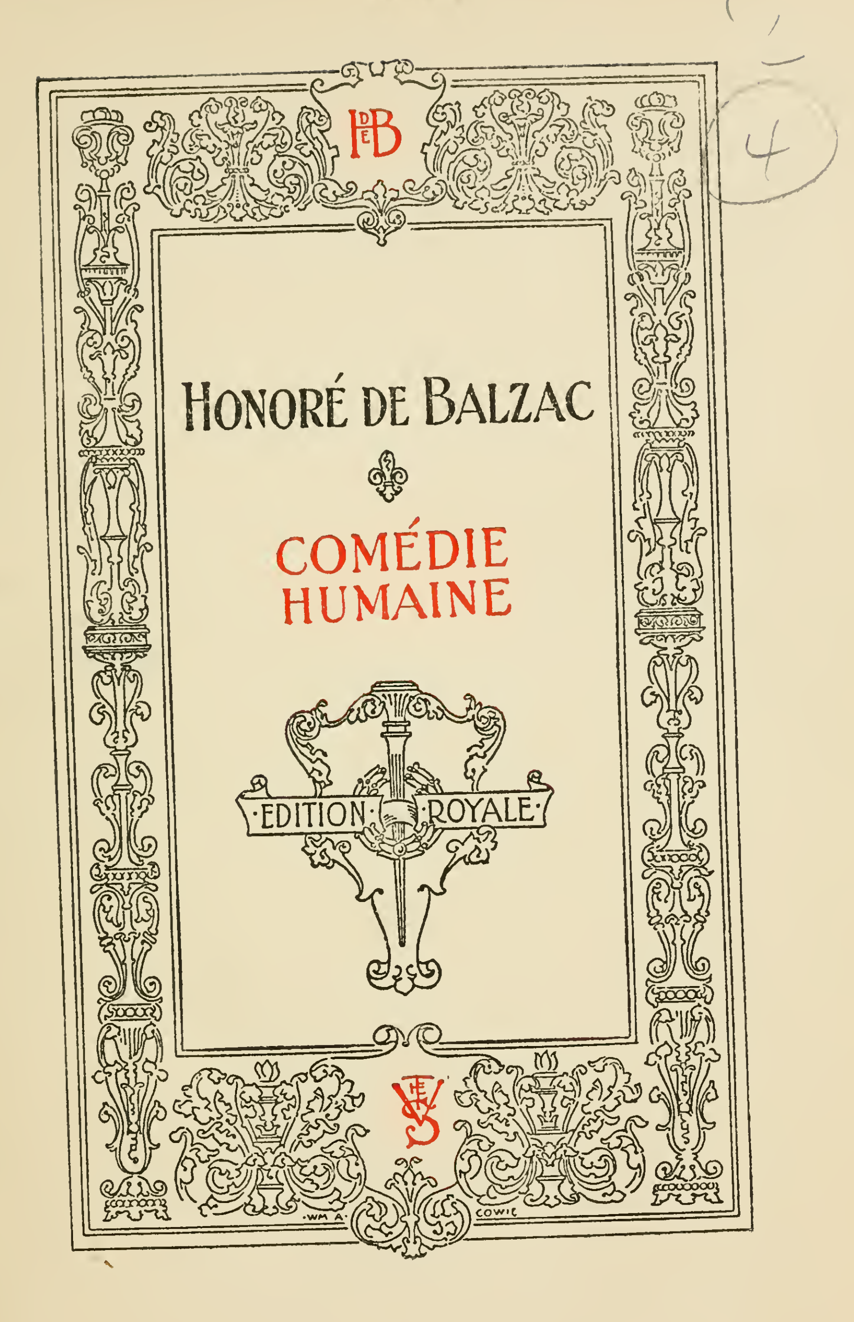

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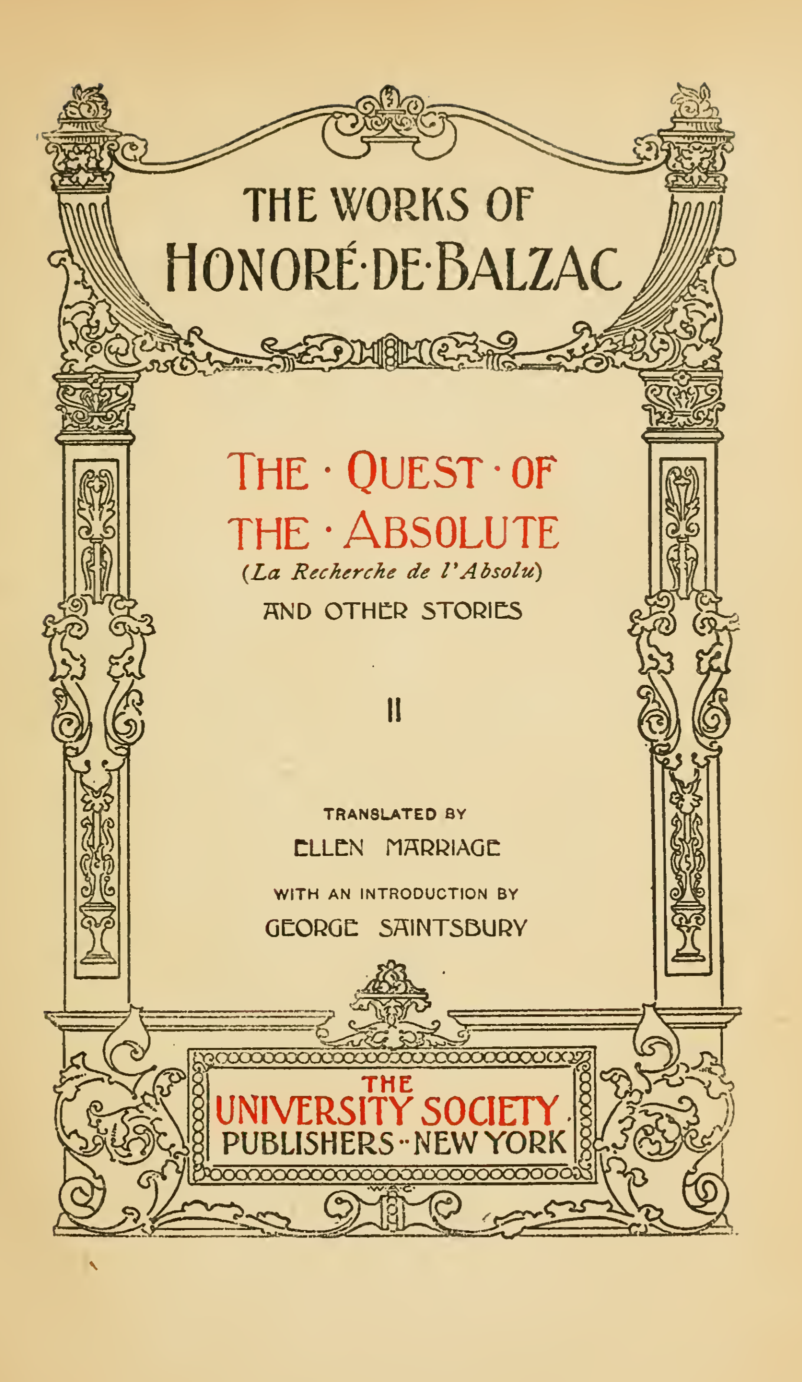




" Kill me ! I must be a vile thing if I love you still "

—*The Unknown Masterpiece, page 239*





THE WORKS OF

HONORÉ·DE·BALZAC

THE · QUEST · OF THE · ABSOLUTE

(La Recherche de l'Absolu)

AND OTHER STORIES

II

TRANSLATED BY

ELLEN MARRIAGE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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INTRODUCTION

The volume of the old edition of the *Comédie Humaine,* which opened with *La Recherche de l'Absolu,* together with that generally entitled *Les Marana,* contains the cream and flower of Balzac as a story-teller; and the first excels the second in showing the fiery heat and glow of the author's imagination. The chief of the minor elements, *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu,* has seemed to some the actual masterpiece of the author.

La Recherche de l'Absolu is, as has been said, a novel in itself. Taking minor points only, it is a masterpiece. That there is a certain parallelism, probably unconscious, between the way in which Balthazar Claes as unconsciously kills his wife, and the way in which Monsieur Grandet kills his, is certainly no drawback to the book; for the repetition, if it is a repetition, only shows how genius can repeat. Indeed, there is the same demonstration contained in the same books in the representation of the diverse martyrdoms of Madame Claes and her daughter Marguerite, fatal in the former case, happily changed in the latter. In no book is Balzac's faculty of Dutch drawing, as far as scenes and details go, more brilliantly shown; in none are the minor characters—from the *famulus* Lemulquinier, with his fatal belief in his master's madness, downwards—better; while Marguerite Claes and her mother, especially Marguerite, are by common consent to be ranked among Balzac's greatest triumphs in portraying "honest women."

But these things, though they illustrate the general principle that the presence of a great central interest and figure will radiate greatness and interest on its surroundings, would contribute comparatively little to the effect of the book if it were not for the Seeker after the Absolute himself. Nowhere, perhaps, has the hopeless tyranny of the fixed idea, the ferocious (not exactly selfish) absorption in the pursuit of a craze, been portrayed with quite the same power as here. And we know and feel that the energy, the fire, the perfection of the handling are due to sympathy—that Balzac a few generations earlier would have sought the Philosopher's Stone with the same desperate energy as Balthazar. Probably nothing but his prior attachment to literary work prevented him from doing something similar; while actually, and as it was, he kept himself in lifelong difficulties by no very different persistence in the corresponding, if more ignoble, Game of Speculation.

I have just said that the tyranny of the ideal has nowhere been more successfully portrayed than in *La Recherche de l'Absolu;* but there is perhaps one exception, and it is *Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu,* which should be carefully compared with the larger fiction. The attraction of this wonderful and terrible piece for all who have anything to do with the things of the spirit, whether in the way of criticism or in the way of creation, can hardly be exaggerated. I remember many years ago spending half an evening in discussing, in a sort of amœbean strain, its merits with the late Mr. Stevenson; and everybody knows the compliment which a distinguished American writer has paid it by attempting a sort of paraphrase of its original. The same interest is present here and in *La Recherche,* but it is a little complicated, a little

refined upon. Here, too, there is the sorcery of the ideal, the frenzied passion for attainment and perfection. But here there is a special *nuance* almost as closely connected with Balzac's individuality as the general scheme. We know that the mania of constant retouching, of adding strokes, was a danger of his own; that he did actually indulge in it to an extent very prejudicial to his pecuniary interest, and perhaps not always advantageous to the effect of his work, though the artist in words is hardly exposed to any such absolutely hopeless catastrophe in such a case as is the artist in line and color.

Yet, wonderful as this is, it cannot in its limited space, and with its intensely concentrated interest, vie with the amplitude, the variety, the dignity of the *Recherche*. Balzac might have made this too long: he was not always proof against that temptation. But in it, as in *Eugénie Grandet*, with which it has been already compared, he has hit the exact mean between a short tale and a long novel, has not sinned by digression and episode, has hardly sinned by undue indulgence in detail. The interest is perhaps remoter from the general human understanding than that of *Eugénie* and one or two others. But it is handled with equal mastery, and the effect is at least equally good.

It is not, of course, that a knowledge of Balzac's own peculiarities adds anything to the sense of the artistic eminence of these two stories. That would be clear if we knew nothing whatever about the other part of the matter. But it cannot be regarded as uninteresting that we should thus know the secret of the *furia*, the "nobler gust" of sympathy and enjoyment with which the writer, consciously or unconsciously, must have set about these two great, and in his own work, almost incomparable things.

The group of short stories which, in the first complete edition of the *Comédie,* opens with *Les Marana,* contains, as I have said, with that in which *La Recherche de l'Absolu* leads off, the very finest productions of the author on a small scale. Almost all the pieces herein contained were early work, written when Balzac was under the combined excitement of his emergence from the valley of the shadow in which he had toiled so long, and of the heat and stress of the political and literary Revolution of 1830. All of them show his very freshest matured power, not as yet in the slightest degree sicklied o'er by any excessive attempt to codify or systematize. It is true that they are called *Études Philosophiques,* and that it puzzles the adroitest advocate to make out any very particular claim that they have to the title. But "philosophy," a term pretty freely abused in all languages, had in French been treated during the eighteenth century and earlier as a sort of "blessed word," which might mean anything, from the misbeliefs and disbeliefs of those who did not believe in the devil to the pursuits of those who meddled with test-tubes and retorts. Balzac seems generally to have meant by it something that was not mere surface-literature—that was intended to make the reader think and feel. In this sense very little of his own work is unworthy of the title, and we certainly need not refuse it to *Les Marana* and its companions.

The only objection that I can think of to the title-tale is a kind of uncertainty in the plan of the character of Juana. It is perfectly proper that she should fall an unsophisticated victim to the inherited tendencies (let it be remembered that Balzac worked this vein with discretion long before it was tediously overworked by literary Darwinians), to her own

genuine affection, and to the wiles of Montefiore. It is quite right, as well as satisfactory, that she should refuse her seducer when she discovers the baseness of his motives. It is natural enough, especially in a southern damsel, that she should submit to the convenient cloak of marriage with Diard, and even make him a good and affectionate wife afterwards. But Balzac seems to me—perhaps I am wrong—to have left us in undue doubt whether she killed Diard purely out of Castilian honor, or partly as a sort of revenge for the sufferings she had undergone in enduring his love. A mixture of the two would be the finer and the truer touch, and therefore it is probable that Balzac meant it; but I think he should have indicated it, not by any clumsy labeling or explanation, but by something "leading up." It may, however, seem that this is a hypercriticism, and certainly the tale is fine enough.

The fantastic horror of *Adieu* may seem even finer to some, but a trifle overwrought to others. Balzac, who had very little literary jealousy in his own way and school, made a confession of enthusiastic regret afterwards that he, Balzac, could not attain to the perfection of description of the Russian retreat which Beyle had achieved. Both were observer-idealists, and required some touch of actual experience to set their imaginations working, an advantage which, in this case, Balzac did not possess, and Beyle did. But I do not think that any one can reasonably find fault with the scenes on the Beresina here. The induction (to use Sackville's good old word) of the story is excellent: and there is no part of a short story, hardly even the end, which is so important as the beginning; for if it fails to lay a grip on the reader, it is two to one that he will not go on with it. The character of Philip de Sucy is finely touched, and the con-

trast of the unconscious selfishness of his love with the uncle's affection is excellent, and not in the least (as it might be) obtrusive. But the point of danger, of course, is in the representation of the pure animalized condition of the unhappy Countess, and her monkey-like tricks. It is never quite certain that a thing of this kind will not strike the reader, in some variable mood, with a sense of the disgusting, of the childish, of the merely fantastic, and any such sense in a tale appealing so strongly to the sense of "the pity of it" is fatal. I can only say that I have read *Adieu* at long intervals of time and in very different circumstances, and have not felt anything of the kind, or anything but the due pity and terror. The style, perhaps, is not entirely Balzac's own; the interest is a little simple and elementary for him; but he shows that he can handle it as well as things more complicated and subtler.

Le Réquisitionnaire, El Verdugo, and *Un Drame au bord de la Mer** may be called, assuredly in no uncomplimentary or slighting sense, anecdotes rather than stories. The hinge, the centre, the climax, or the catastrophe (as from different points of view we may call it), is in all cases more important than the details and the thread of narrative. They are all good, but *El Verdugo* is far the best: the great incident of the father blessing his son and executioner in the words "Marquis [his own title] frappe sans peur, tu es sans reproche," being worthy of Hugo himself.

La Recherche de l'Absolu appeared in 1834, with seven chapter-divisions, as a *Scène de la Vie Privée;* was published by itself in 1839 by Charpentier; and took its final place as a part of the *Comédie* in 1845.

* *Un Drame au bord de la Mer* is included in a later volume.

All the *Marana* group of stories appeared together in the fourth edition of the *Études Philosophiques,* 1835-1837. Most of them, however, had earlier appearances in periodicals and in the *Romans et Contes Philosophiques,* which preceded the *Études.* And in these various appearances they were subjected to their author's usual processes of division and unification, of sub-titling and cancelling sub-titles. *Les Marana* appeared first in the *Revue de Paris* for the last month of 1832 and the first of 1833; while it next made a show, oddly enough, as a *Scène de la Vie Parisienne. Adieu* appeared in the *Mode* during June 1830, and was afterwards for a time a *Scène de la Vie Privée. Le Réquisitionnaire* was issued by the *Revue de Paris* of February 23, 1831; *El Verdugo* by the *Mode* for January 29, 1830; *L'Auberge Rouge* in the *Revue de Paris,* August 1831; *L'Elixir de longue Vie,* by the same periodical for October 1830; *Maître Cornélius,* again by the same for December 1831. *Un Drame au bord de la Mer* alone appeared nowhere except in book form with its companions; but in 1843 it left them for a time (afterwards to return), and as *La Justice Paternelle* accompanied *La Muse du Département, Albert Savarus,* and *Facino Cane* in a separate publication.

Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu appeared in the *Artiste* of 1831, before its present date, as a "Conte fantastique," in two parts. It almost immediately became one of the *Romans et Contes Philosophiques,* passed in 1837 to the *Études Philosophiques,* was most unequally yoked for a time with *Les Comédiens sans le savoir,* and took definite rank in 1845 as usual.

G. S.

NOTE.—*L'Auberge Rouge, L'Elixir de longue Vie, Un Drame au bord de la Mer,* and *Maître Cornélius* have been omitted, and postponed to a future volume, owing to exigencies of space.

THE QUEST OF THE ABSOLUTE

To Madame Josephine Delannoy née Doumerc.

Madame, may God grant that this, my book, may live longer than I, for then the gratitude which I owe to you, and which I hope will equal your almost maternal kindness to me, would last beyond the limits prescribed for human affection. This sublime privilege of prolonging life in our hearts for a time by the life of the work we leave behind us would be (if we could only be sure of gaining it at last) a reward indeed for all the labor undertaken by those who aspire to such an immortality. Yet again I say—May God grant it!

DE BALZAC.

THERE is in Douai, in the Rue de Paris, a house that may be singled out from all others in the city; for in every respect, in its outward appearance, in its interior arrangements, and in every detail, it is a perfect example of an old Flemish building, and preserves all the characteristics of a quaint style of domestic architecture thoroughly in keeping with the patriarchal manners of the good folk in the Low Countries. But before proceeding to describe the house, it may not be wholly unnecessary here to enter, on behalf of authors, a protest in favor of those didactic preliminaries for which the ignorant and impatient reader has so strong a dislike. There are persons who crave sensations, yet have not patience to submit to the influences which produce them; who would fain have flowers without the seed, the child without gestation. Art, it would seem, is to accomplish what nature cannot.

It so happens that human life in all its aspects, wide or narrow, is so intimately connected with architecture, that with a certain amount of observation we can usually reconstruct a bygone society from the remains of its public monuments. From relics of household stuff, we can imagine its owners "in their habit as they lived." Archæology, in fact, is to the body social somewhat as comparative anatomy is to animal organizations. A complete social system is made clear to us by a bit of mosaic, just as a whole past order of things is implied by the skeleton of an ichthyosaurus. Beholding the cause, we guess the effect, even as we proceed from the effect to the cause, one deduction following another until a chain of evidence is complete, until the man of science raises up a whole bygone world from the dead, and discovers for us not only the features of the Past, but even the warts upon those features.

Hence, no doubt, the prodigious interest which people take in descriptions of architecture so long as the writer keeps his own idiosyncrasies out of the text and does not obscure the facts with theories of his own; for every one, by a simple process of deduction, can call up the past for himself as he reads. Human experience varies so little, that the past seems strangely like the present; and when we learn what has been, it not seldom happens that we also behold plainly what shall be again. As a matter of fact, we can seldom see a picture or a description of any place wherein the current of human life has once flowed, without being put in mind of our own personal experience, our broken resolutions, or our blossoming hopes; and the contrast between the present, in which our heart's desire is never given to us, and the future, when our wishes may be fulfilled, is an inexhaustible source of melancholy or delightful musings. How is it that Flemish art, with its pictures of Flemish life, makes an almost irresistible appeal to our feelings whenever the little details are faithfully rendered? Perhaps the secret of the charm lies in this—that there seems less uncertainty and perplexity in this matter-of-fact life than in any other. Such art could

hardly exist without the opulent comfort which comes of a prosperity of long use and wont; it depicts an existence peaceful to the verge of beatitude, with all its complicated family ties and domestic festivals; but it is no less the expression of a tranquillity wellnigh monotonous, of a prosperity which frankly finds its happiness in self-indulgence, which has nothing left to wish for, because its every desire is gratified as soon as it is formed. Even passionate temperaments, that measure the force of life by the tumult of the soul, cannot see these placid pictures and feel unmoved; it is only shallow people who think that because the pulse beats so steadily the heart is cold.

The energy that expends itself in a sudden and violent outbreak produces a far greater effect on the popular imagination than an equal force exerted slowly and persistently. The crowd have neither the time nor the patience to estimate an enormous power which is uniformly exerted; they do not reflect on appearances; they are borne too swiftly along the current of life; it is therefore only transcendent passion that makes any impression upon them, and the great artist is most extolled when he exceeds the limits of perfection: Michael Angelo, Bianca Cappello, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Beethoven, Paganini,—you may pass their names in review. It is only a rare and great power which knows that there must be no overstepping of the limit line, that sets in the first place that quality of symmetry, that completeness which stamps a perfect work of art with the profound repose which has so strong a charm for those who are capable of recognizing it. But the life adopted by this practical people is in all respects the ideal life of the citizen as conceived of by the lower classes; it is a bourgeois paradise in which nothing is lacking to fill the measure of their felicity.

A highly refined materialism is the distinguishing characteristic of Flemish life. There is something dull, dreary, and unimaginative about English "comfort;" but a Flemish interior, with its glowing colors, is a delight to the eyes, and there is a blithe simplicity about the homeliness of Flemish

life; evidently the burden of toil is not too heavily felt, and the tobacco-pipe shows that the Flemings have grasped and applied the Neapolitan doctrine of *far niente,* while a tranquil appreciation of art and beauty in their surroundings is no less evident. In the temper of the people, indeed, there are two of the most essential conditions for the cultivation of art: patience, and that capacity for taking pains which is necessary if the work of the artist is to live; these are pre-eminently the characteristics of the patient and painstaking Fleming. The magical splendor, the subtle beauty of poetry, are attainments impossible for patience and conscientiousness, you think? Their life in Flanders must be as monotonously level as the lowlands of Holland, and as dreary as their clouded skies! But it is nothing of the kind. The power of civilization has been brought to bear in every direction—even the effects of the climate have been modified.

If you notice the differences between the products of various parts of the globe, it surprises you at first that the prevailing tints of the temperate zones should be grays and tawny-browns, while the brilliant colors are confined to tropical regions—a natural law which applies no less to habits of life. But Flanders, with her naturally brown and sober hues, has learned how to brighten the naturally foggy and sullen atmosphere in the course of many a political revolution. From her old lords, the Dukes of Burgundy, she passed to the Kings of Spain and France; she has been forced to seek allies in Holland and in Germany, and Flemish life bears witness to all these changes. There are traces of Spanish dominion in their lavish use of scarlet, of lustrous satins, in the bold designs of their tapestry, in their drooping feathers and mandolins, in their stately and ceremonious customs. From Venice, in exchange for their linen and laces, they received the glasses of fantastic form in which the wine seems to glow with a richer color. From Austria they received the tradition of the grave and deliberate diplomacy which, to quote the popular adage, "made three steps in a bushel basket."

Their trade with the Indies has brought them in abundance the grotesque inventions of China and the marvels of Japan. But with all their receptiveness, their power of absorbing everything, of giving out nothing, and of patiently enduring any yoke, Flanders could hardly be regarded as anything but a European curiosity shop, a mere confusion of nationalities, until the discovery of tobacco inaugurated a new era. Then the national character was fused and formed out of all these scattered elements, and the features of the first Fleming looked forth at last upon the world through a cloud of tobacco-smoke. Ever since that time—no matter for their frontiers and their lands divided piecemeal—there is no question of the solidarity of the Flemings; they are one nation, thanks to the tankard and the tobacco-pipe.

So Flanders, with its practical turn, has constantly assimilated the intellectual and material wealth of its masters and neighbors, until the country, originally so dreary and unromantic, has recast its life on a model of its own choosing, acquiring the habits and manners best suited to the Flemish temperament without apparently losing its own individuality or independence. The art of Flanders, for instance, did not strive after ideal forms; it was content to reproduce the real as it had never been reproduced before. It is useless to ask this country of monumental poetry for the verve of comedy, for dramatic action, for musical genius, for the bolder flights of the epic or the ode; its bent is rather for experimental science, for lengthy disputations, for work that demands time, and smells somewhat of the lamp. All their researches are of a practical kind, and must conduce to physical well-being. They look at facts and see nothing beyond them; thought must bear the yoke and be subservient to the needs of life; it must occupy itself with realities, and never soar above or beyond them. Their sole conception of a national career was a sort of political thrift, their force in insurrection was the outcome of an energetic desire to have sufficient elbow-room at table and to take their ease beneath the eaves of their *steedes*.

It was this love of comfort, together with the independent attitude of mind which is a result of prosperity, that led them first to feel that desire for liberty which, later on, was to set all Europe in a ferment. Moreover, there is a dogged tenacity about a Fleming and a fixity of idea which makes him grow dangerous in the defence of his rights. They are a thorough people; and whether it is a question of architecture or furniture, of dykes or agriculture or insurrection, they never do things by halves. No one can approach them in anything they set themselves to do. The manufacture of lace, involving the patient cultivation of flax and the still more patient labor of the worker, together with the industry of the linen weaver, have been the sources of their wealth from one generation to another.

If you wished to paint Stability incarnate, perhaps you could not do better than take some good burgomaster of the Low Countries for model; a man not lacking in heroism, and, as has often been seen, ready to die in his citizen fashion an obscure death for the rights of his Hansa.

But the grace and poetry of this patriarchal existence is naturally revealed in a description of one of the last remaining houses, which at the time when this story begins still preserved the traditions and the characteristics of that life in Douai.

Of all places in the department of the Nord, Douai (alas!) is the town which is being modernized most rapidly; modern innovations are bringing about a revolution there. Old buildings are disappearing day by day, old-world ways are almost forgotten in the widespread zeal for social progress. Douai now takes its tone, its ways of life, and its fashions from Paris; in Douai there will soon be little left of the old Flemish tradition save its assiduous and cordial hospitality, together with the courtesy of Spain, the opulence and cleanliness of Holland. The old brick-built houses are being replaced by hôtels with white stone facings. Substantial Batavian comfort is disappearing to make way for elegant frivolity imported from France.

The house in which the events took place, which are to be described in the course of this story, was almost half-way down the Rue de Paris, and has borne in Douai, for more than two hundred years, the name of the *Maison Claes.*

The Van Claes had formerly been among the most celebrated of the families of craftsmen who founded the commercial prosperity of the Netherlands. For many generations Claes succeeded Claes as the Dean of the great and powerful Guild of Weavers in Ghent. When Charles V. endeavored to deprive the city of its privileges and Ghent rose in revolt, the wealthiest of the Claes found himself so deeply compromised that, foreseeing the inevitable end and the fate reserved for him and his companions, he sent away his wife and children and valuables under a French escort, before the city was invested by the Imperial troops. Events proved that the fears of the Dean of the Guild were but too well founded. When the city capitulated, he and some few fellow-citizens were excepted by name from the general amnesty, and the defender of the rights and privileges of Ghent was hanged as a rebel against the Empire. The death of Claes and his companions bore its fruits; in the years to come these useless cruelties were to cost the King of Spain the best part of the Netherlands. Of all seed sown on earth, the blood of the martyrs in the surest, and the harvest follows soonest upon the sowing.

While Philip II. visited the sins of revolted Ghent upon its children's children, and ruled Douai with a rod of iron, the Claes (whose vast fortunes were unimpaired) connected themselves by marriage with the elder branch of the noble house of Molina, an alliance which repaired the fortunes of that illustrious family, and enabled them to purchase back their estates; and the broad lands of Nourho, in the kingdom of Leon, came to support an empty title. After this, the course of the family fortunes was sufficiently uneventful until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the family of Claes, or rather the Douai branch of it, was represented in the person of M. Balthazar Claes-Molina, Count of Nourho,

who preferred to style himself simply Balthazar Claes. Of all the vast wealth accumulated by his ancestors who had kept so many looms at work, and set in motion so many wheels of commerce, there remained to Balthazar an income of about fifteen thousand livres, derived from landed property in and around Douai, the house in the Rue de Paris, and its furniture, which was worth a little fortune. As for the estates in Leon, they had caused a lawsuit between Molina of Flanders and Molina of Spain. The Molinas of Leon gained the day, and assumed the title of Counts of Nourho, although in truth it belonged to the elder branch, the Flemish Claes; but bourgeois vanity in the Belgian house rose superior to Castilian pride.

When, therefore, formal designations were registered, Balthazar Claes put off the rags of Spanish nobility to shine with all the lustre of his descent from citizens of Ghent. The instinct of patriotism was so strong in the exiled families, that until the very end of the eighteenth century the Claes remained faithful to family traditions, manners, and customs. They only married into the most strictly bourgeois families, requiring a certain number of aldermen, burgomasters, or the like civic dignitaries among the ancestors of the bride-elect before receiving her among them. Now and then a Claes would seek a wife in Bruges or Ghent, or as far away as Liège, or even in Holland, that so the domestic traditions might be kept up. Their circle became gradually more and more restricted, until towards the end of the last century it was limited to some seven or eight families of municipal nobility, wearers of heavy-hanging, toga-like cloaks, who combined the dignified gravity of the magistrate with that of the Spanish grandee, and whose manner of life and habits were in harmony with their appearance. The family of Claes was looked on by the rest of the citizens with a kind of awe that was almost superstitious. The unswerving loyalty, the spotless integrity of the Claes, together with their staid, impressive demeanor under all circumstances, had given rise to a sort of legend of the Claes, and the "Maison Claes" was as much

an institution in the city as the Fête de Gayant. The spirit of old Flanders seemed to fill the old house in the Rue de Paris, in which lovers of municipal antiquity would find a perfect example of the unpretending houses which the wealthy burghers of the Middle Ages built for themselves to dwell in.

The principal adornment of the house front was the great doorway with its folding leaves of oak, studded with large nails, arranged in groups of five; in the centre the Claes had proudly carved their arms, two spindles conjoined. The pointed archway was of sandstone, and was surmounted by a little statuette of St. Genevieve with her spindle, set in a sort of shrine with a cross above it. The delicate carving about the shrine and the doorway had grown somewhat darker by the lapse of time; but so carefully had it been kept by the owners of the house, that every detail was visible at a passing glance. The clustered shafts in the jambs on either side the doorway had preserved their dark gray color, and shone as if their surfaces had been polished. The windows were all alike. The sill was supported by a richly-carved bracket, the window frame was of white stone and in the form of a cross, so that the window itself was divided into four unequal parts, the two lower lights being nearly twice the size of the upper. Each of the upper divisions was surmounted by an arch, which sprang from the height of the central mullion. These arches consisted of a triple row of bricks, each row jutting out above the one beneath it by way of ornament; the bricks in each row, moreover, alternately projected and receded about an inch, so as to form a sort of checkered pattern. The small lozenge-shaped panes were set in exceedingly slender reticulating bars, which were painted red.

For the sake of added strength a course of white stone was built at intervals into the brick walls, which were jointed with white mortar, and the corners of the house were constructed of white stone quoins.

There were two windows on the ground floor, one on either side of the door, five in the first story, and but three in the second, while the third immediately beneath the roof was

lighted by a single circular window, divided into five compartments, and faced with sandstone. This window was set in the centre of the gable like a rose window over the arched gateway of a cathedral.

The weathercock on the ridge of the roof was a spindle filled with flax. The two sides of the great gable rose stepwise from the height of the first story, and at this departing point a grotesque gargoyle on either side discharged the rain-water from the gutters. All round the base of the house there ran a projecting course of sandstone like a step. Finally, on either side, between the window and the door lay a trap-door, heavily bound and hinged with iron scroll-work, a relic of the days of yore.

Ever since the house had been built the front had been carefully scoured twice a year; not a particle of mortar came loose or fell out but was immediately replaced. The costliest marbles in Paris are not kept so clean and so free from dust as the window-bars, sills, and outside stonework of this Flemish dwelling. The whole house front was in perfect preservation. The color of the surface of the brick might be somewhat darkened by time, but it was as carefully kept as an old picture or some book-lover's cherished folio,—treasures that would never grow old were it not for the noxious gases distilled by our atmosphere, which no less threaten the lives of their owners. The clouded skies of Flanders, the dampness of the climate, the absence of light or air caused by the somewhat narrow street, soon dimmed the glories of this periodically renewed cleanliness, and, moreover, gave the house a dreary and depressing look. A poet would have welcomed a few blades of grass in the openwork of the little shrine, and some mosses on the surface of the sandstone; he might have wished for a cleft or crack here and there in those two orderly rows of bricks, so that a swallow might find a place in which to build her nest beneath the red triple arches of the windows. There was an excessive neatness and smoothness about the house front, worn with repeated scourings; an air of sedate propriety and of grim respectability

which would have driven a Romantic writer out of the opposite house if he had been so ill advised as to take up his abode there.

When a visitor had pulled the wrought-iron bell-handle that hung by the side of the door, and a maid-servant from some inner region had opened the heavy folding-doors, they fell to again with a clang that echoed up into the lofty roof of a great paved gallery, and died away in remote murmurs through the house. You would have thought that the doors had been made of bronze. From the gallery, which was always cool, with its walls painted to resemble marble, and its paved floor strewn with fine sand, you entered a large square inner court paved with glazed tiles of a greenish color. To the left lay the kitchens, laundry, and servants' hall; to the right the wood-house, the coal-cellars, and various offices. Every window and door was ornamented with carving, which was kept exquisitely spotless and free from dust. The whole place was shut in by four red walls striped with bars of white stone, so that the daylight which penetrated into it seemed in its passage to take a faint red tint, which was reflected by every figure, and gave a mysterious charm and strange unfamiliar look to every least detail.

On the further side of this courtyard stood that portion of the house in which the family lived, the *quartier de derrière,* as they call it in Flanders, a building exactly similar to the one facing the street. The first room on the ground floor was a parlor lighted by four windows; two looked out upon the courtyard, and two upon a garden, a space of ground about as large as that on which the house was built. Access to this garden and to the courtyard was given by two opposite glass doors, which occupied the same relative position as the street door; so that as soon as a stranger entered, the whole house lay before him, as well as a distant vista of the greenery at the further end of the garden beyond it.

Visitors were received in that portion of the house which looked out upon the street, and strangers were lodged in apartments in the second story; but though these rooms con-

tained works of art and costly furniture, there was nothing which, in the eyes of Claes himself, could be compared with the art treasures that filled the rooms which had been the centre of family life for centuries, and a discerning taste would have confirmed his judgment. The historian should not omit to record of the Claes who died for the cause of freedom in Ghent, that he had accumulated nearly forty thousand silver marks, gained by the manufacture of sail-cloths for the all-powerful navy of Venice. The Flemish craftsman was a man of substance, and had for his friend the celebrated wood-carver Van Huysium of Bruges. Many times the artist had had recourse to his friend's purse. When Ghent rose in revolt, Van Huysium, then himself a wealthy man, had secretly carved for his old friend a piece of paneling of massive ebony, on which he had wrought the story of Van Artevelde, the brewer who for a little while ruled over Flanders. This piece of wood-work consisted of sixty panels, and contained about fourteen hundred figures; it was considered to be Van Huysium's masterpiece.

When Charles V. made up his mind to celebrate his entry into the city which gave him birth by hanging twenty-six of its burghers, the victims were consigned to the custody of a captain, who (so it was said) had offered to connive at Claes' escape in return for these panels of Van Huysium's, but the weaver had previously sent them into France.

The parlor in the house in the Rue de Paris was wainscoted entirely with these panels. Van Huysium, out of respect for the memory of the martyr, had come himself to set them in their wooden framework, painted with ultramarine, and covered with a gilded network, so that this is the most complete example of a master whose least fragments are now worth their weight in gold. Titian's portrait of Claes in the robes that he wore as President of the Tribunal des Parchons looked down from the chimney-piece; he still seemed to be the head of the family which regarded him with veneration as its great man. The chimney-piece, itself originally plain stone, had been reconstructed of white marble

during the eighteenth century. A venerable timepiece stood upon the ledge between two five-branched candle sconces, tortuous, elaborate, and in the worst possible taste, but all of massive silver. The four windows were draped with crimson brocaded damask curtains, covered with a dark flowered pattern, and lined with white silk; the furniture had been re-covered with the same material in the time of Louis XIV. The polished floor was evidently modern—large squares of white wood, with slips of oak inserted between them, but the ceiling yet preserved the peculiarly deep hues of Dutch oak. Perhaps it had been respected because Van Huysium had carved the masks on the medallions bordered with scrolls which adorned it.

In each of the four corners of the parlor stood a short column, with a five-branched silver sconce upon it, like those upon the chimney-piece, and a round table occupied the centre of the room. Several card-tables were ranged along the walls with much precision; and on the white marble slabs of two gilded console tables stood, at the time when this story begins, two glass globes full of water, in which gold and silver fish were swimming above a bed of sand and shells.

The room was sombre, and yet aglow with color. The ceiling of dark oak seemed to absorb the light, and to give none of it back into the room. If the sunlight pouring in from the windows that looked out into the garden scintillated from every polished ebony figure on the opposite wall, the light admitted from the courtyard was always so faint that even the gold network on the other side looked dim in the perpetual twilight.

A bright day brought out all the glories of the place; but, for the most part, its hues were subdued and soft, and like the sombre browns and reds of autumn forests, they took brighter hues only in the sun. It is unnecessary to describe the "Maison Claes" at further length. Many of the scenes in the course of this story will, of course, take place in other parts of the house, but it will be sufficient for the present to have some idea of its general arrangement.

On a Sunday afternoon towards the end of August, in the year 1812, a woman was sitting in a large easy-chair by one of the windows that looked out on the garden. It was after the time of vespers. The rays of sunlight falling on the side of the house slanted across the room in broad beams, played with fantastic effect on the opposite wall, and died away among the sombre ebony figures of the panels; but the woman sat in the purple shadow cast by the damask curtain. A painter of mediocre ability could not have failed to make a striking picture if he had faithfully portrayed a face with so sad and wistful an expression. The woman was sitting with her feet stretched out before her in a listless attitude; apparently she had lost all consciousness of her physical existence, and one all-absorbing thought had complete possession of her mind, a thought which seemed to open up the paths of the future just as a ray of sunlight piercing through the clouds lights up a gleaming path on the horizon of the sea. Her hands hung over the arms of the chair; her head, as though it bore a load of thought too heavy, had fallen back against the cushions. She wore a loose cambric gown, very simply made; the scarf about her shoulders was carelessly knotted on her breast, so that the lines of her figure were almost concealed. Apparently she preferred to call attention to her face rather than to her person; and it was a face which, even if it had not been brought into strong relief by the light, would have arrested and fixed the attention of any beholder, for its expression of dull, hopeless misery would have struck the most heedless child. Nothing is more terrible to witness than such anguish as this in one who seldom gives way to it; the burning tears that fell from time to time seemed like the fiery lava flood of a volcano. So might a dying mother weep who is compelled to leave her children in the lowest depths of wretchedness without a single human protector.

The lady seemed to be about forty years of age. She was more nearly beautiful now than she had ever been in her girlhood. Clearly she was no daughter of the land. Her hair

was thick and black, and fell in curls over her shoulders and about her face; her forehead was very prominent, narrow at the temples, sallow in hue, but the black eyes flashed fire from beneath her brows, and she had the dark pallor of the typical Spaniard. The perfect oval of her face attracted a second glance; the ravages of smallpox had destroyed the delicacy of its outlines, but had not marred its graciousness and dignity; at times it seemed as if the soul had power to restore to it all its pristine purity of form. If pride of birth was revealed in the thick tightly folded lips, there was also natural kindliness and graciousness in their expression; but the feature which gave most distinction to a masculine type of face was an aquiline nose. Its curve was somewhat too strongly marked, the result, apparently, of some interior defect; but there was a subtle refinement in its outlines, in the thin septum and fine transparent nostrils that glowed in the light with a bright red. She was a woman who might, or might not, be considered beautiful, but no one could fail to notice the vigorous yet feminine head.

She was short, lame, and deformed; she had married later than women usually do, and this partly because it was insisted that her slow-wittedness was stupidity; yet more than one man had read the indications of ardent passion and of inexhaustible tenderness in her face, and had fallen completely under the spell of a charm that was difficult to reconcile with so many defects. She bore in many ways a strong resemblance to the Spanish grandee, her ancestor the Duke of Casa-Real. Perhaps the force of the charm which romantic natures had erewhile found so tyrannous, the power of a fascination that sways men's hearts, but is powerless to rule their destinies, had never in her life been greater than now, when it was wasted, so to speak, on empty space. She seemed to be watching the gold fish in the glass before her, but in truth her eyes saw nothing, and she raised them from time to time, as if imploring Heaven in despair; it would seem that such trouble as hers could be confided to God alone.

The room was perfectly silent save for the chirping of the

crickets without; the shrill notes of a few cicadas came in with a breath of hot air from the little garden, which was like a furnace in the afternoon sun. From a neighboring room there came smothered sounds; silver or china rattled, or chairs were moved, as the servants laid the cloth for dinner.

Suddenly the lady started and seemed to listen; she took her handkerchief, dried her eyes, and endeavored to smile; so successfully did she efface all traces of sorrow, that from her seeming serenity it might have been thought that she had never known an anxiety or a care in her life. It was the sound of a man's footstep that had wrought the change. It echoed in the long gallery built over the kitchens and the servants' quarters, which united the front part of the house with the back portion in which the family lived. Whether it was because weak health had so long confined her to the house that she could recognize the least noise in it at once; or because a highly-wrought temperament ever on the watch can detect sounds that are imperceptible to ordinary ears; or because nature, in compensation for so many physical disadvantages, had bestowed a gift of sense-perception seldom accorded to human beings apparently more happily constituted; this sense of hearing was abnormally acute in her. The sound of the footsteps came nearer and nearer. And soon, not only for an impassioned soul such as hers, which can annihilate time and space at will that so it may find its other self, but for any stranger, a man's step on the staircase which led to the parlor was audible enough.

There was something in the sound of that footstep which would have struck the most careless mortal; it was impossible to hear it with indifference. We are excited by the mere sounds of hurry or flight; when a man springs up and raises the alarm of "Fire!" his feet are at least as eloquent as his tongue, and the impression left by a slow measured tread is every whit as powerful. The deliberate, heavy, lagging footfall in the gallery would no doubt have irritated impatient people; but a nervous person, or an observer of human nature, could scarcely have heard it without feeling a thrill

of something very like dread. Was there any life in those feet that moved so mechanically? It was a dull, heavy sound, as if the floor boards had been struck by an iron weight. The slow, uncertain step called up visions of a man bending under a load of years, or of a thinker walking majestically beneath the weight of worlds. The man reached the lowest stair, and set foot upon the pavement slowly and irresolutely. In the great hall he paused for a moment. A passage led thence to the servants' quarters, a door concealed in the wainscot gave admittance to the parlor, and through a second parallel door you entered the dining-room.

A light tremor, caused by a sensation like an electric shock, ran through the frame of the woman in the easy-chair; but a sweet smile trembled on her lips, her face lighted up with eager expectation, and grew fair and radiant like the face of an Italian Madonna. She summoned all her strength, and forced back her terrors into some inner depth; then she turned and looked towards the door set in the panels in the corner of the parlor; it flew open so suddenly that the startling sound was quite sufficient to account for and to cover her agitation.

Balthazar Claes appeared and made several paces forward; he either did not look at the woman in the low chair, or if he looked at her, it was with unseeing eyes. He stood upright in the middle of the parlor, his head slightly bent, and supported by his right hand. The smile faded from the woman's face; her heart was pierced by a horrible pang, felt none the less keenly because it had come to be a part of her daily experience, her dark brows contracted with pain, deepening lines already traced there by the frequent expression of strong feeling, and her eyes filled with tears, which she hastily brushed away, as she looked at Balthazar.

There was something exceedingly impressive about the head of the house of Claes. In his younger days he had borne a strong resemblance to the heroic martyr who had threatened to play the part of Artevelde and defied the Emperor, Charles V.; but at the present moment the man of

fifty or thereabouts might have been sixty years of age and more; and with the beginnings of a premature old age, the likeness to his great-minded ancestor had ceased. His tall figure was slightly bent; perhaps he had contracted the habit by stooping over his books, or perhaps the curvature was due to the weight of a head over-heavy for the spine. He was broad-chested and square-shouldered; his lower extremities, though muscular, were thin; you could not help casting about for some explanation of this puzzling singularity in a frame which evidently had once been perfectly proportioned. His thick, fair hair fell carelessly over his shoulders in the German fashion, in a disorder which was quite in keeping with a strange air of slovenliness and general neglect. His forehead was broad and high; the prominence of the region to which Gall has assigned Ideality was very strongly marked. The clear, dark-blue eyes seemed to have a power of keen and quick vision, a characteristic often noted in students of occult sciences. The shape of the nose had doubtless once been perfect; it was very long, the nostrils had apparently grown wider by involuntary tension of the muscles in the continual exercise of the sense of smell. The hollows in a face which was beginning to age seemed all the deeper by force of contrast with the high cheek-bones, thickly covered with short hair. The mouth with its gracious outlines seemed, as it were, to be imprisoned between the nose and a short, sharply turned-up chin.

Certain theorists, who have a fancy for discerning animal resemblances in human countenances, would have seen in the long, rather than oval, face of Balthazar Claes a likeness to the head of a horse. There was no softness or roundness about its outlines; the skin was tightly drawn over the bones as if it had shrunk under the scorching influence of a fire that burned within; there were moments when the eyes looked out into space as if seeking for the realization of his hopes, and at such times this fire that consumed him seemed to escape from his nostrils.

There are deep thoughts which seem to be living forces

of which great men are the embodiment; some such thought seemed to be visibly expressed in the pale face with its deeply-carved wrinkles, to have scored the furrows on a brow like that of some old king full of cares, and to shine forth most clearly from the brilliant eyes; the fire in them seemed to be fed by the temperate life which is the result of the tyrannous discipline of great ideas, and by the fires of a mighty intelligence. They were deeply set and surrounded by dark circles, which seemed to tell of long vigils and of terrible prostration of mind consequent on reiterated disappointments, of hopes that sprang up anew only to be blighted, of wear and tear of body and mind. Art and Science are jealous divinities; their devotees betray themselves by unmistakable signs. There was a dreamy abstractedness and aloofness in Balthazar Claes' manner and bearing which was quite in keeping with the magnificent head so lacking in human quality. His large hands, covered with hair, were soiled; there were jet-black lines at the tips of the long finger nails. There was an air of slovenliness about the master of the house which would not have been tolerated in any of its other inmates.

His shoes were seldom cleaned, or the laces were broken or missing. His black cloth breeches were covered with stains, buttons were lacking on his waistcoat, his cravat was askew, his coat had assumed a greenish tint, here and there the seams had given way; everything about him, down to the smallest trifle, combined to produce an uncouth effect, which in another would have indicated the lowest depths of outcast misery, but in Balthazar Claes it was the neglect of genius.

Vice and genius bring about results so similar that ordinary people are often misled by them. What is genius but a form of excess which consumes time and money and health and strength? It is an even shorter road to the hospital than the path of the prodigal. Men, moreover, appear to pay more respect to vice than to genius; for they decline to give it credit or credence. It would seem that genius concerns itself with aims so far remote, that society is shy of cast-

ing accounts with it in its lifetime; such poverty and wretchedness are clearly unpardonable. Society prefers to have nothing to do with genius.

Yet there were moments when it would have been hard to refuse admiration to Balthazar Claes—moments when, in spite of his absent-mindedness and mysterious preoccupation, some impulse drew him to his fellows, and the face of the thinker was lighted up by a kindly thought expressed in the eyes, the hard light in them disappeared, and he looked round him and returned (so to speak) to life and its realities; at such times there was an attractive beauty in his face, a gracious spirit looked forth from it. Any one who saw him then would regret that such a man should lead the life of a hermit, and add that "he must have been very handsome in his youth." A vulgar error. Balthazar Claes had never looked more interesting than at this moment. Lavater would certainly have studied the noble head, have recognized the unwearying patience, the stainless character, the steadfast loyalty of the Fleming, the great and magnanimous nature, the power of passion that seemed calm because it was strong. Such a man would have been a constant and devoted friend, his morals would have been pure, his word sacred; all these qualities should have been dedicated to the service of his country, to his own circle of friends, and to his family; it was the will of the man which had given them a fatal misdirection; and the citizen, the responsible head of a household and disposer of a large fortune, who should have been the guide of his children towards a fair future, lived apart in a world of his own in converse with a familiar spirit, a world in which his duties and affections counted for nothing. A priest would have seen in him a man inspired by God, an artist would have hailed him as a great master, an enthusiast might have taken him for some seer after the pattern of Swedenborg.

As he stood by the window, his ragged, disordered, and threadbare costume was in strange contrast with the graceful dainty attire of the woman who watched him so sadly. A

nice taste in dress often distinguishes persons of mental ability or refinement of soul who suffer from bodily deformity. They are conscious that their beauty is the beauty of mind and soul, and are content to dress simply, or they discover how to divert attention from their physical defects by a studied elegance in every detail. And the woman in the low chair had not only a generous soul, but she loved Balthazar Claes with that woman's intuition which is a foretaste of the intelligence of angels. She had been brought up in one of the noblest families of Belgium, so that even if her taste had not been instinctive it would have been acquired; and, tutored since then by her desire to please the eyes of the man she loved, she had learned to dress herself admirably, and to adopt a style which subdued the effect of her deformity. Moreover, although one shoulder was certainly larger than the other, there was no other defect in her figure. She glanced through the window into the courtyard, and then into the garden, as if to make sure that no one was within hearing, turned meekly to Balthazar, and spoke in the low tones that Flemish women use, for the love between these two had long since conquered Castilian pride.

"You must be very deep in your work, Balthazar? This is the thirty-third Sunday since you have been to mass or vespers."

Claes made no reply. His wife bowed her head, clasped her hands, and waited, watching him the while. She knew that his silence was due neither to contempt nor to indifference, but to the tyranny of an all-absorbing thought. In the depths of some natures the sensitive delicacy of youth lingers long after youth has departed, and Balthazar Claes would have shrunk from uttering any thought that might wound, however slightly, a woman who was always oppressed with the painful consciousness of her physical deformity. And this dread was ever present with him. He understood, as few men do, how a word or a single glance has power to efface the happiness of whole years; nay, that such words have a more cruel power, because they are utterly at variance with the

constant tenderness of the past; for we are so made that our happiness makes us more keenly sensitive to pain, while sorrow has no such power of intensifying a transitory gleam of joy. After a few moments, Balthazar roused himself, gave a quick glance round him, and said, "Vespers? . . . Ah! the children have gone to vespers."

He stepped towards the window, and looked out into the garden, where the tulips blazed in all their glory. Then he stopped suddenly, as if he had come into collision with a wall, and exclaimed, "Why should they not combine in a given time?"

"Can he be going mad?" his terrified wife asked herself.

If the reader is to understand the interest of this scene, and the situation out of which it arose, it will be necessary to glance over the previous history of Balthazar Claes and of the granddaughter of the Duke of Casa-Real.

Towards the end of the year 1783, M. Balthazar Claes-Molina de Nourho, then twenty-two years of age, might have passed for a "fine gentleman," as we say in France. He had just completed his education in Paris; his manners had been formed in the society of Mme. d'Egmont, a set composed of Frenchmen who came originally of Belgian families, or of Belgians distinguished either by birth or by fortune. Great nobles and persons of the highest fashion, such as the Count of Horn, the Prince of Aremberg, the Spanish Ambassador, and Helvétius were among the Belgian residents in Paris. The young Claes had relations and friends there who introduced him into the great world, just as the great world was about to return to chaos; but, like many young men, he was attracted at first by glory and by knowledge rather than by frivolity. He frequented the society of learned men, waxed enthusiastic for science, and became an ardent disciple of Lavoisier, who was then better known for the vast fortune he had acquired as farmer-general of taxes than for the scientific discoveries which were to make the name of the great chemist famous long after the farmer-general was forgotten.

But Claes was young, and as handsome as Helvétius, and Lavoisier was not his only instructor. Under the tuition of women in Paris he soon learned to distil the more volatile elixirs of wit and gallantry; and although he had previously thrown himself into his studies with an enthusiasm that had won the commendations of his master, he deserted Lavoisier's laboratory to take final lessons in *savior-vivre* under the guidance of the arbitresses of good manners and good taste, the queens of the high society which forms a sort of family all over Europe.

These intoxicating dreams of success did not last long, however; Balthazar Claes breathed the air of Paris for a while; and then, in no long time, he turned his back on the capital, wearied by the empty life, which had nothing in it to satisfy an enthusiastic and affectionate nature. It seemed to him that the quiet happiness of family life, a vision called up by the very name of his native Flanders, was the life best suited to his character and to the aspirations of his heart. The gilding of Parisian salons had not effaced old memories of the sombre harmonies of the parlor in the old house in Douai, of the little garden, and the happy days of his childhood.

Those who would fain dwell in Paris should have no ties of home or of fatherland. Paris is the chosen city of the cosmopolitan, or of those who are wedded to social ambition; by means of art, science, or political power, they gain a hold on the world which they never relax.

The child of Flanders went back to the house in Douai as La Fontaine's pigeon flew home to its nest. It was the day of the Fête Gayant, and tears came into his eyes at the sight of the procession. Gayant, the Luck of the city, the embodiment of the spirit of old Flemish traditions, had been introduced into Douai since his family had been driven to take refuge there. The Maison Claes was empty and silent; his father and mother had died during his absence, and for some time family affairs required his presence there.

After the first sorrow for his loss his thoughts turned to

marriage. All the sacred ties which bound him to his home and the pieties of the hearth had reawakened a strong desire in him to complete the happy existence of which he had dreamed; he determined to do as his forefathers had done, and went to Ghent, to Bruges, and to Antwerp in search of a bride. He probably had ideas of his own as to marriage, for it had always been said of him from his earliest youth that he never could keep to the beaten track, or do as other people did.

It so fell out that one day while on a visit to one of his relations in Ghent, he heard of a young lady in Brussels concerning whom opinions differed considerably. Some considered that Mlle. Temninck's beauty was quite spoiled by her deformity, others hotly insisted that she was perfection. Among these last was Balthazar Claes' somewhat elderly cousin, who told his guests that, beautiful or no, Mlle. Temninck had a soul which would have induced him to marry her if he had been choosing a wife. And with that he told how she had given up all her claims on the family estates so that her younger brother might make a marriage befitting his rank and name; thus setting his happiness before her own, and sacrificing her life to him, for it was scarcely to be expected that Mlle. Temninck would marry now that she had no fortune and the bloom of youth was past, when no suitor had presented himself for the heiress in her girlhood.

A few days later Balthazar Claes had obtained an introduction to Mlle. Temninck, now a woman of twenty-five years of age, and had fallen deeply in love with her. Josephine de Temninck chose to regard this as a passing fancy, and refused to listen to M. Claes; but the influence of passion is very subtle, and in this love for her in a man who had youth and good looks, and a straight, well-knit frame, there was something so attractive to the poor lame and deformed girl that she yielded to it.

Could a whole volume suffice to tell the story of the love that thus dawned in the girl's heart? The world had pronounced her to be plain, and she had meekly acquiesced in

the decision, conscious though she was of possessing the irresistible charm which calls forth true and lasting love. And now at the prospect of happiness, what fierce jealousy awoke in her, what wild projects of vengeance if a rival stole a glance, what agitations and fears such as seldom fall to the lot of women, which cannot but lose by being passed over in a few brief words! The analysis must be minute. Doubt, the dramatic element in love, would be the keynote of a story in which certain souls would find once more the poetry of those early days of uncertainty, long since lost but not forgotten. the ecstasy in the depths of the heart which the face never betrays, the fear of not being understood, and the unspeakable joy of a swift response; the misgivings which lead the soul to shrink within itself; the moments when, as if drawn forth by some magnetic power, the soul reveals itself in the eyes by infinite subtle shades; wild thoughts of suicide that arise at a word, only to be laid to rest by a tone in a voice whose vibrations reveal unsuspected depths of feeling; tremulous glances full of terrible audacity; swift, passionate longings to speak or act rendered powerless by their very vehemence; communings of soul with soul in commonplace phrases which owe all their eloquence to the faltering of the voice; mysterious workings of that divine discretion and modesty of soul which is generous in the shade, and finds exquisite delight in sacrifices which can never be recognized; youthful love, in short, with the weaknesses of its strength.

Mlle. Josephine de Temninck was a coquette through loftiness of soul. The painful consciousness of her deformity made her as unapproachable and hard to please as the prettiest of women. She dreaded that a day would come when her lover would cease to care for her, and the thought awakened her pride and destroyed her confidence in herself. With stoical firmness, she locked away in her inmost heart the first feelings of happiness in which other women love to deck themselves in the eyes of the world. The more love drew her to Balthazar Claes, the less she dared to give expression to love. A glance, a gesture, a question, or a

response from a pretty woman would have been flattering to a man; but for her, was not any advance a humiliating speculation? A pretty woman can be herself, people look leniently on her follies or mistakes; but a single glance has power to stop the play of expression on a plain woman's features, to make her still more timid, shy, and awkward. Does she not know that she of all women can afford no blunders; that no indulgence will be extended to her; nay, that no one will give her any opportunity of repairing them? She must always be faultless; does not the thought chill and dishearten her while the constant strain exhausts her powers? Such a woman can only live in an atmosphere of divine indulgence, and where can the hearts be found in which indulgence is not poisoned by a lurking taint of pity?

There is a sort of consideration more painful to sensitive souls than even positive unkindness, for it aggravates their misfortunes by continually giving them prominence. The cruel politeness of society was intolerable to Mlle. de Temninck. She schooled herself into self-possession, forced back into some inner depth the most beautiful thoughts that arose in her soul, and took refuge in an icy reserve of manner and bearing. She only dared to love in secret, and was eloquent or charming only in solitude. She was plain and insignificant in broad daylight, but she would have been a beautiful women if she could have lived by candle-light. Not seldom she had made perilous trials of Balthazar's love, risking her whole happiness to be the surer of it, disdaining the aid of dress and ornaments, by which the effect of deformity could be softened or concealed, and the Spaniard's eyes grew full of witchery when she saw that even thus she was beautiful for Balthazar Claes.

Yet even the rare moments when she ventured to give herself up to the joy of being loved were embittered by distrust and fears. Before long she began to ask herself whether Claes wished to marry her that he might have a docile slave, whether he had not some defect which made him content to wed a poor deformed girl. The doubts and anxieties which

continually harassed her made those hours unspeakably precious, in which she felt sure that this was a true and lasting love which should make her amends for all the slights of the world. She provoked discussions on the delicate subject of her own plainness, dwelling upon it and exaggerating it that she might the better probe her lover's nature, and came in this way by some truths but little flattering; yet she loved him for the perplexity in which he found himself when she had led him on to say that a woman is most beloved for a beautiful soul and for the devotion which makes the days of life flow on in quiet happiness; that after a few years of marriage a wife may be the loveliest woman on earth or the plainest, it makes no difference to her husband. In support of this theory he had heaped together such truth as lies in various paradoxical assertions that beauty is of very little consequence, till he suddenly became aware of the ungraciousness of his arguments. All the goodness of his heart was revealed by the tact and delicacy with which he gradually changed his ground and made Mlle. Temninck understand that for him she was perfect.

Perhaps, in a woman, devotion is the highest height of love. Devotion was not wanting in this girl who did not dare to hope that love would not fail. She felt attracted by the prospect of a struggle in which sentiment was to triumph over beauty; there was something great, she thought, in giving herself to love with no blind faith that love would last; and finally, this happiness, brief as it might prove, must cost her so dear that she could not refuse to taste it. These questionings and inward struggles gave all the charm, all the varying moods of passion to this exalted nature, and inspired in Balthazar a love that was almost chivalrous.

The marriage took place in the beginning of the year 1795. They went back to Douai to spend the first weeks of their married life in the ancestral home of the Claes. The household treasures there had been increased. Mlle. de Temninck brought with her several fine paintings by Murillo and Velasquez, her mother's diamonds, and the splendid wedding pres-

ents sent by her brother, who had succeeded to the title, and was now Duke of Casa-Real. Few women were as happy as Mme. Claes. There was not the slightest cloud in the happiness that lasted for fifteen years, a happiness that, like a bright light, transformed even the most trivial details of daily life.

In most men there are inequalities of character which cause continual dissonances, small weaknesses that lead to bickerings, till the harmony of domestic life is spoiled, and the fair ideals perish. One man may be conscientious and hardworking, but he is hard and stern; another is good-natured but obstinate; a third will love his wife sincerely, but he never knows his own mind; while a fourth is so absorbed in his ambitions that he looks on affection as a debt to be discharged, and if he gives all the vanities of fortune he takes all joy out of the day.

Mediocrity, in short, is by its very nature incomplete, though its sins of omission and commission are not heinous. Clever folk are as changeable as the barometer, genius alone is essentially good. Perfect happiness is accordingly only to be found at either extreme of the intellectual scale; there is a like equability of temperament in the good-natured idiot and in the man of genius, arising in the one case from weakness, and in the other from strength of character. Both are capable of a constant sweetness of temper, which softens the roughnesses of life. In the one its source is an easy-natured tolerance, and in the other it springs from indulgence; a man of genius, moreover, is the interpreter of a sublime thought, which cannot fail to bring his whole life into conformity with itself. Both natures are simple and transparent; the one because of its shallowness, the other by reason of its depth. Clever women, therefore, are sufficiently ready to take a dunce as the best substitute for a man of genius.

Balthazar's greatness of character showed itself from the first in the most trivial details of life. Conjugal love was a magnificent thing in his eyes; he determined to develop all

its beauty; and, like all powerful characters, he could not bear that there should be any falling short in attainment. His ingenuity continually varied the calm monotony of happiness, and everything that he did bore the stamp of a noble nature. For instance, although he was in sympathy with the philosophical movement of the eighteenth century, he installed a priest in his household until the year 1801 (a step which laid him open to the severe penalties of the Revolutionary code), humoring the bigoted Catholicism which his Spanish wife had imbibed with her mother's milk. After the Roman Catholic worship was restored in France, he went with her every Sunday to mass.

His attachment never quitted the forms of passion. He never asserted the protecting power that women love so well to feel, because to his wife it would have seemed like pity. On the contrary, by a most ingenious form of flattery he treated her as his equal, and would break into playful rebellion against her authority, as a man will sometimes permit himself to set the power of a pretty woman at defiance. A smile of happiness always hovered upon his lips, and his tones were unvaryingly gentle.

He loved his Josephine for her sake and for his own with a warmth and intensity which is a constant tribute to the beauty and the character of a wife. Fidelity, often the result of social, religious, or interested considerations, seemed in his case to be involuntary, and was always accompanied by the sweet flatteries of the springtime of love. Duty was the sole obligation of marriage which was unknown to these two equally loving beings, for Balthazar Claes found in Josephine de Temninck a constant and complete realization of his hopes. His heart was always satisfied to the full; he was always happy, and never weary of his happiness. As might have been expected, the granddaughter of the house of Casa-Real, with her Spanish blood, possessed the secret of an "infinite variety," but she had no less a capacity for a limitless devotion, and a woman's genius lies in devotion, as all her beauty consists in grace. Her love was a blind fanaticism;

at a sign from him she would have gone joyfully to her death. Balthazar's delicacy had brought out all the womanly generosity of her nature, and she longed to give more than she received. This mutual exchange of a happiness which each in turn lavished upon the other, visibly centered her life without her, and filled her words, her looks, and actions with a love that only grew stronger with time. On all sides gratitude enriched and varied the life of the heart, just as the certainty that each lived only for the other made littleness impossible, and the least accessories of such a life ceased to be trivialities.

But in the whole feminine creation are there any happier women than the deformed wife who is not crooked for the eyes she loves, the lame woman when her husband would not have her other than she is, and the wife grown old and gray who is still young for him? Human passion can go no further than this. When a woman is adored for what is usually regarded as a defect, is not this her greatest glory? It is easy to forget in a moment's fascination that a woman does not walk straight; but when she is loved because she is lame, it is the apotheosis of her infirmity. In the evangel of women these words should perhaps be written, *"Blessed are the imperfect, for theirs is the kingdom of love."* And of a truth beauty must be a misfortune for a woman, for the flower of beauty that withers so soon counts for so much in the feeling that she inspires; is she not loved for her beauty as an heiress is wedded for her gold? But a woman without this perishable dower, after which the children of Adam seek so eagerly, knows the love that is love indeed, the inmost mystery of passion, the union of soul with soul. The day of disillusion can never come for her. Her charm is not recognized by the world, she owes it no allegiance, and is fair for one alone; and when she makes it her glory that her defects should be forgotten, she cannot but succeed in her aim.

Accordingly, the best loved women in history have been by no means perfectly beautiful for ordinary eyes; Cleopatra, Joanna of Naples, Diana of Poitiers, Mlle. de la Vallière,



The older man . . . knocked thrice at the door



Madame de Pompadour, and nearly all women famous throughout the world for the love which they once inspired, have had their defects and shortcomings, while others of whom it is recorded that there was no flaw in their loveliness have over and over again seen love end in piteous tragedy. Do mankind live, after all, rather by sentiment than by pleasure? Perhaps there is a limit to the charm of mere physical beauty, while the beauty of the soul is infinite? Is not this the moral of the tale which forms a setting to the *Arabian Nights?* If Henry VIII. had found a hard-featured wife, she might have defied the axe, and retained the wandering fancy of her royal master.

Mme. Claes was ill-educated, a curious circumstance, but explainable enough in the daughter of a Spanish grandee. She could read and write, but until her parents took her from the convent where her girlhood was spent (that is to say, until she was twenty years old) she had read nothing but the works of religious ascetics. On her entrance into society, and for a little while after, she had been too eager for amusement to learn anything but the frivolous arts of the toilette; and later, she had been so deeply mortified by her ignorance, that she never ventured to take any part in conversation, and was set down in consequence as an unintelligent girl. But one result of her neglected and mystical education had been that her natural capacities for thought and feeling had been unspoiled. In society she was as plain and uninteresting as an heiress; but for her husband she grew beautiful and thoughtful.

Balthazar made some attempt, it is true, in the early years of their marriage to teach his wife, so that she might not feel at a disadvantage in this way, but doubtless he was too late, for Josephine had no memory save that of the heart. She never forgot a syllable that he let fall concerning themselves; every least detail of their happy life was fresh in her mind, while yesterday's lesson was forgotten. This invincible ignorance might have brought about serious discords between many a husband and wife; but Mme. Claes' love for her hus-

band was almost a religion, and the intuition of passionate love and desire to preserve her happiness had made her quick-witted. She so contrived matters that she always appeared to understand, and her ignorance was very seldom too apparent. Not only so, but when two love each other so well that every day seems for them the first day of their love, such vital happiness has a marvelous power of transforming the whole conditions of life. Does it not become like childhood, careless of everything that is not love or joy and laughter?

While the life stirs in us, and its fires burn fiercely, we let it burn unthriftily, nor set ourselves to measure the means or the end. For the rest, Mme. Claes understood her position as a wife better than any daughter of Eve. Her character was a piquant combination of Spanish pride with the submissiveness of the Flamande which makes the domestic hearth so attractive. She was dignified; she could command respect by a glance which revealed a consciousness of her own value and her high descent, but before Claes she trembled. She had sei her husband so on high, so near to God, that the thought of what he would say or think controlled her every thought or action, and her love had come to have a tinge of awe which heightened it. She had made it a point of honor to maintain the old Flemish bourgeois traditions of the house; she had prided herself on the plenty and comfort of her housekeeping, on the classic cleanliness of every detail; everything must be of the best, every dish at dinner must be exquisitely cooked and served. She so ruled things in her household that all their outer life was in harmony with the life of the heart.

They had two boys and two girls. The oldest child, a girl named Marguerite, was born in 1796; the youngest, a three-year-old boy, they had called Jean Balthazar. Motherly love was almost as strong in Mme. Claes as her affection for her husband. Sometimes, especially in the last years of her life, there was a cruel struggle between love for her husband and love for her children, when two claims upon her heart so nearly equal had become in some sort antagonistic. This

was the domestic drama hidden away in the sleepy old house, and in the scene with which the story opens her tears and the anguish on her face were caused by a fear that she had sacrificed her children to her husband.

In 1805 Mme. Claes' brother had died leaving no children. His sister, according to Spanish law, could not inherit the estates, which passed with the title to the heir-at-law; but the Duke had left to her about sixty thousand ducats, and the representative of the younger branch of the house did not challenge the will. No thought of interest had ever mingled with their love; yet Josephine found a certain satisfaction in the thought that her fortune now equaled that of her husband, and was glad that in her turn she brought something to him from whom she had been generously content to receive everything. So it chanced that Balthazar's marriage, which prudent people had condemned, turned out to be a good match from a worldly point of view.

It was a sufficiently difficult problem to know what to do with the money. The Maison Claes was so rich in treasures of art, in pictures and valuable furniture, that it was scarcely possible to find anything worthy of being added to such a collection, formed by the taste of their ancestors. The noble collection of pictures had been begun by one generation and completed by those that followed, a love of art having thus become a family tradition. There were fifty paintings in the state apartments on the first floor, and in the long gallery which connected those rooms with the quarter in which the family lived there were more than a hundred famous pictures by Rubens, Ruysdael, Van Dyck, Terburg, Gerard Dow, Teniers, Mieris, Paul Potter, Wouverman, Rembrandt, Hobbema, Cranach, and Holbein. Three centuries of patient research had assembled them. Examples of the French and Italian schools were in the minority, but nevertheless they were all of them genuine and of capital importance.

Another generation had been amateurs of Oriental porcelain. Some Claes, long dead and gone, had been an enthusiastic collector of old furniture or of silver plate; Balthazar's

own father, the last survivor of the once famous Dutch society, had bequeathed to his son one of the finest known collections of tulips; there was not a Claes but had left some trace of his ruling passion, and every Fleming is a born collector. The old house was superbly furnished with heirlooms, which represented vast sums of money. Without, it was as smooth and bare as a sea-shell, and like a shell it was decked within with fair colors and radiant mother-of-pearl.

Balthazar Claes also possessed a country house in the plain of Orchies. So far from adopting the French plan and living up to his income, he never spent more than one-fourth of it, following old Batavian usages. This put him on the same footing as the wealthiest persons in Douai, for their yearly expenditure never exceeded twelve hundred ducats.

In the days when the Civil Code became the law of the land, the wisdom of this course was abundantly evident. By virtue of the clause *des Successions,* which divides the estate in equal shares among the children, each child's share would have been small, and the treasures stored for so long in the house of Claes must have one day been dispersed. With his wife's concurrence Balthazar invested Mme. Claes' fortune in such a manner as to secure to each of their children a position similar to that in which they had been brought up, and the house of Claes was still kept up on the old footing. They bought woods which had suffered somewhat in the recent wars, but which in ten years' time, with due care, were likely to increase enormously in value.

The society in which M. Claes moved consisted of the oldest families of Douai. His wife's noble qualities and character were so thoroughly appreciated, that by a sort of tacit agreement the social regulations so stringently enforced in old-fashioned towns were somewhat relaxed in her case. During the winter months, which were always spent in Douai, she seldom left her house, and went very little into society—society came to her. She received every Wednesday, and gave three large dinner parties every month. It was generally recognized that Mme. Claes felt more at ease in her own house,

and she herself was little inclined to leave it; her love for her husband and her children, whom she was bringing up very carefully, kept her at home.

Until the year 1809 there was no change in the ways of the household, thus privileged to form an exception to accepted social rules. The life of these two beings, with its hidden depths of love and joy, flowed on to all appearance like other lives. Balthazar Claes' passion for his wife, which she had known how to keep, seemed, as he himself said, to have determined his bent, and his innate perseverance was employed in the cultivation of happiness, as he had cultivated tulips in his youth; it absolved him from the necessity for a mania traditional in his family. But at the end of the year a change came over Balthazar; it came about so imperceptibly that at first Mme. Claes did not think it necessary to ask the reason of these ominous signs. One evening he seemed preoccupied as he went to bed, and she conscientiously respected his mood. Her woman's tact and habits of submission had always led her to wait for Balthazar's confidence; she felt far too sure of his affection to give way to jealousy. Yet though she knew that any inquiry would meet with a prompt answer, the old impressions of early life had given her an instinctive dread of a rebuff. Her husband's moral malady went through many stages, and only by slow degrees did it assume an acute form, and grow so intolerably violent that at last the happiness of a whole household was destroyed. However engrossing Balthazar's thoughts might be, he was ready for many months to lay them aside to talk with her; and there was no alteration in his affection, his frequent silent moods were the only indications of the change that was being wrought in his character.

It was long before Mme. Claes gave up the hope that her husband would approach the subject himself and tell her about his mysterious preoccupations. Sometimes she thought that he was waiting until there should be some practical result of his labors; there is a kind of pride in so many men which leads them to fight their battles alone and to appear

only as victors. In that day of triumph the light of happiness would shine all the more brightly for being withdrawn for a while, and Balthazar's love would fill up all the blank spaces in the page of life, blanks for which his heart was not to blame. Josephine knew her husband well enough to know that he would never forgive himself if he discovered that his Pepita's happiness had been overcast for so many months. So she kept silence, and felt it a kind of joy to suffer through him and for him; for in her passion there was a trace of the piety of the Spaniard, which can never distinguish between religion and love, and cannot understand a love without suffering. She waited for a return of affection, saying to herself every evening, "It will surely come to-morrow!" as if love were an absent wanderer. During all these secret troubles she was expecting her youngest child. There had been a horrible revelation of a wretched future. Everything seemed to draw her husband from her, and even in his love he was preoccupied. Her woman's pride, wounded for the first time, sounded the depths of the mysterious gulf which separated her from the Claes of their early married life. From that time things grew worse and worse. Claes, who but lately had been immersed in family happiness, who played with his children for whole hours together at romping games on the carpet, in the parlor, or in the garden walks, who seemed as if he could only live beneath the dark eyes of his Pepita, did not notice his wife's condition, forgot to share in the family life, and seemed to forget his own existence.

The longer Mme. Claes delayed to ask the reason of his preoccupation, the more her courage failed her. Her blood seemed to boil at the thought, and her voice died in her throat. At last she felt convinced that her husband had ceased to care for her, and grew seriously alarmed. This dread grew upon her; she brooded over it till her hours were filled with unhappy musings and feverish excitement, and she began to .despair. She justified Balthazar at her own expense, telling herself that she was old and ugly. Then it seemed to her that she saw a generous motive, humiliating

though it might be to her pride, in his absorption in his work; it was a kind of negative faithfulness; she determined to give him back his independence by bringing about a secret divorce, that clue to the apparent happiness of not a few households. Yet before renouncing their old life, she made an effort to read her husband's heart—and found it shut.

She saw how Balthazar, by slow degrees, became indifferent to everything that had once been dear to him; he cared no longer for his tulips in flower; he seemed to have forgotten the very existence of his children. Clearly this passion was one of those that lie without the pale of the heart's affections, but which no less, as women think, dry up the springs of affection. Love slept, but had not fled. This was some comfort, though the trouble itself remained as heretofore; and hope, the explanation of all situations like these, prolonged the crisis.

Sometimes, just as the poor wife's despair had grown to such a pitch that she had gathered courage to question her husband, there would be a brief interval of happiness, and Balthazar would make it clear to her that though he might be in the clutches of some diabolical thought, it was a thought which still permitted him to be himself again at times. In these brief moments, when her sky grew brighter, she was too eager to enjoy the gleam of happiness, too afraid to lose any of it by her importunity, to ask for an explanation; and just as she nerved herself to speak, he would escape her. While the words were on her lips, Balthazar would suddenly leave her, or he would fall into deep musings from which nothing could arouse him.

Before very long there set in a reaction of the mental on the physical existence. The havoc thus wrought was scarcely visible at first, save to the eyes of a loving woman, who watched for a clue to her husband's inmost thoughts in their slightest manifestations. She could often scarcely keep back the tears as she saw him fling himself down after dinner into an easy-chair by the fireside, and sit there with his eyes fixed on one of the dark panels, gloomy, abstracted, utterly heedless

of the dead silence about him. She watched, too, with an aching heart the gradual changes for the worse in the face that love had made sublime for her; it seemed as if the life of the soul was day by day withdrawing itself and leaving an expressionless mask. At times his eyes grew glassy, as if the faculty of sight in them had been converted to a power of inner vision. After the children had gone to bed, after long silent hours full of painful and solitary brooding, poor Pepita would venture to ask, "Do you feel ill, dear?" Sometimes Balthazar would not answer at all, or he came to himself with a start like a man suddenly awakened from sleep, and said, "No," in harsh, sepulchral tones, which fell heavily on his wife's quivering heart.

Josephine tried at first to keep this anomalous state of things in their household a secret from the outer world, but this proved to be impossible. Balthazar's behavior was known and discussed in every coterie, in every salon; and, as frequently happens in little towns, certain circles were better informed as to the Claes' affairs than Mme. Claes herself. Several of her friends broke through the silence prescribed by politeness, and showed so much solicitude on her account, that she hastened to explain her husband's singular conduct.

"M. Balthazar," she said, "was engaged on a great work. It took up all his time and energies; but if it succeeded, it would make him famous, and his native town would have reason to be proud of him."

Patriotic enthusiasm runs high in Douai; you would be hard put to it to find a town more eager for distinction; the prospect of glory was gratifying to local vanity; there was a reaction in people's minds, and M. Claes' proceedings were viewed more respectfully.

His wife's guesses were not so very far from the truth. Workmen had been employed for some time past in the garret above the state apartments, whither Balthazar went every morning. He spent more and more of his time up there now, until at last he was in the garret all day long, and his wife and the rest of the family fell in with the new ways by degrees.

But Mme. Claes had yet to learn, to her unspeakable anguish, that her husband was always buying scientific apparatus in Paris; that books, machines, and costly materials of all kinds were being sent to him; and that he was bent on discovering the Philosopher's Stone. All this she must hear through the officious kindness of friends who were surprised to find her in ignorance of her husband's doings. It was a bitter humiliation. These friends proceeded to say that she ought to think of her children and of her own future, and that she would be doing very wrong if she did not use her influence with her husband to turn him from the paths of error into which he had strayed. Mme. Claes might summon a great lady's insolence to her aid, and silence this absurd talk; but a sudden terror seized her in spite of her confident tone, and she determined that she would no longer efface herself. She would choose her ground, and speak to her husband on an equal footing; and so, feeling less tremulous, she ventured to ask Balthazar for the cause of the change in him and the reason of his continual seclusion. The Fleming frowned as he answered her:

"My dear, you would not understand it in the least."

One day Josephine had begged hard to know this secret, playfully grumbling that she who shared his life might not share all his thoughts.

"If you want to know about it so much," Balthazar answered, seeing his wife on her knees, "I will tell you. I am studying chemistry," he said, stroking her black hair, "and I am the happiest man in the world."

Two years after the winter in which M. Claes began his experiments, the house was no longer the same. Perhaps the chemist's abstracted ways had given offence; perhaps his acquaintances felt themselves to be in the way; or it may have been that the anxieties of which Mme. Claes never spoke had altered her, and people found her less charming than heretofore. Whatever the cause might be, she only received visits from her most intimate friends, and Balthazar went nowhere. He shut himself up in his laboratory all day, and

sometimes all night; his family never saw him except at dinner. After the second year the winter and summer were alike spent in Douai; his wife had no desire to leave Balthazar and go alone to their country house.

Balthazar would take long solitary walks, sometimes only returning on the following day. Those were long nights of sickening anxiety for his wife. In Douai, as in most fortified towns, the gates of the city were shut at a fixed hour; when search and inquiry within the walls had been made in vain, poor Mme. Claes had not even the support of expectation, half hope, half anguish, and must wait till morning as best she might. And in the morning Balthazar would return as if nothing had happened. He had simply forgotten, in his abstraction, the hour at which the gates were closed, and had no suspicion of the torture which he had inflicted on his family. The joy and relief were nearly as perilous for Mme. Claes as terror and suspense had been. She made no comment; she never spoke to him of his wanderings. Once she had begun to ask a question, and she had not forgotten the tone of amazement in which he answered:

"Why, cannot one take a walk?"

The passions cannot be deceived. Mme. Claes' own misgivings bore witness of the truth of the reports which she had at first so lightly contradicted. She had suffered so much from polite conventional sympathy in her youth that she had no wish to experience it a second time. She therefore immured herself more closely than ever in her home, her acquaintances dropped off, and her few remaining friends soon followed suit.

Balthazar's slovenly attire was by no means the least of her troubles. There is always something degrading in neglect of this kind for a man who belongs to the upper classes; and she felt it all the more keenly, because she had been used to a Flemish refinement of cleanliness. With the help of Lemulquinier, her husband's valet, Josephine tried for a while to repair the havoc wrought by these pursuits; but the new garments with which, without Claes' knowledge, she replaced

the torn, burnt, and stained clothing, were little better than rags by the end of the day, and she gave up the attempt in despair.

After fifteen years of happiness, it seemed to the wife, who had never known a pang of jealousy, that she counted for nothing in the heart where she had reigned but lately, and the Spaniard in her nature awoke. Science was her rival. Science had won her husband's heart from her, and love renewed its strength in the fires of jealousy that consumed her heart. But what could she do? What resistance could she make against this slowly growing tyrannous power that never relaxed its hold? this invisible rival who could not be slain? A woman's power is limited by nature; how can she engage in a struggle with an Idea, with the infinite delights of thought and charms that are always renewed? What could she attempt in the face of the coquetries of ideas which take new forms and grow fairer amid difficulties, which beckon to the seeker, and lure him on so far from the world that he grows forgetful of all things else, and human love and human ties are as nothing to him?

A day came at last when, in spite of strict orders from Balthazar, his wife determined that at least in bodily presence she would be near him; she also would live in the garret where he had shut himself up, and meet her rival there on her own ground and at close quarters; she would be with her husband during the long hours which he lavished on the terrible mistress who had won his heart from her. She meant to steal into the mysterious workshop, and to earn the right of remaining there. But as she dreaded an explosion of wrath, and feared a witness of the scene, she waited for a day when her husband should be alone, before making her effort to share with Lemulquinier the right of entry into the laboratory. For some time she had watched the man's comings and goings, and almost hated him. Was it not intolerable that the servant should know all that she longed to learn, all that her husband hid from her, and that she did not dare to ask? It seemed to her that Lemulquinier was more privi-

leged, and stood higher in her husband's estimation than she, his own wife.

So she went to the garret, trembling, yet almost happy, and for the first time in her life was made to feel Balthazar's anger. Scarcely had she opened the door, when he rushed forward and seized her, and pushed her out on to the staircase so roughly that she narrowly escaped a headlong fall.

"God be praised! You are still alive!" cried Balthazar, as he helped her to rise.

The splinters of a shattered glass mask fell about Mme. Claes; she looked up and saw her husband's face, white, haggard, and terrified.

"Dear, I told you not to come here," he gasped, sinking down on a step as if all his strength had left him. "The saints have saved your life. I wonder how it chanced that my eyes were fixed on the door just then. We were all but killed!"

"I should have been very happy to die so," she said.

"My experiment is utterly ruined," Balthazar went on. "I could not forgive any one else for causing me such a grievous disappointment; it is too painful. In another moment I should perhaps have decomposed nitrogen! . . . There, go back to your own affairs," and Balthazar returned to his laboratory.

"I should perhaps have decomposed nitrogen!" the poor wife said to herself, as she went back to her own room; and once there, she burst into tears.

The phrase conveyed no meaning to her. Men, whose education gives them a certain readiness to deal with new ideas, do not know how painful it is to a woman to lack the power to understand the thoughts of the man she loves. These divine creatures are more indulgent than we are; they do not tell us when they fail to find response to the language of their souls; they shrink from making us feel the superiority of their sentiments, dissemble their pain joyfully, and are silent about the pleasures that we do not enter into. But they are more ambitious in love than we are; they must do more than wed

a man's heart, they must share his thoughts as well. Ignorance of her husband's scientific pursuits gave Mme. Claes a more intolerable heartache than a rival's beauty could have caused. The woman who loves the most is at least conscious of this advantage over her rival; but such neglect as this left her face to face with her utter helplessness; it was a humiliating indifference to all the affections that help us to live.

Josephine loved, but she did not know; and her want of knowledge separated her from her husband. But besides this and beyond this, there lay a last extremity of torture; he was often between life and death, it seemed; under the same roof, and yet far from her, he was risking his life without her knowledge, in dangers which she might not share. It was like hell—a prison for the soul from which there was no way of escape, where there was no hope left. Mme. Claes determined that at any rate she would learn in what the attractions of this science consisted, and privately set herself to read works on chemistry. Then the house became like a convent.

The "Maison Claes" had passed through all these successive changes, and by the time that this story commences was almost "dead to the world."

The crisis grew more complicated. Like all impassioned natures, Mme. Claes never thought of herself; and those who know love, know that where affection is concerned money is of small moment, and interest and affection are almost incompatible. Yet it was not without a cruel pang that Josephine learned that there was a mortgage of three hundred thousand francs on her husband's estates. There were documents which proved this beyond a doubt, and gave occasion for gossip and dismayed conjecture in the town. Mme. Claes, justly alarmed, felt compelled, proud though she was, to make inquiries of her husband's notary, to confide her anxieties to him, or to enable him to guess them; and was forced to hear from the lips of the man of business the humiliating inquiry—"Then has not M. Claes as yet said anything to you about it?"

Luckily, Balthazar's notary was almost a relation. M. Claes' grandfather had married one of the Pierquins of Antwerp, of the same family as the Pierquins of Douai; and ever since the marriage the latter branch, though scarcely acquainted with the Claes, had looked upon them as cousins. M. Pierquin, a young man of six-and-twenty, had just succeeded to his father's position; he alone, in his quality of notary and kinsman, had the right of entry to the house. Mme. Balthazar Claes had lived for many months in such complete seclusion, that she was obliged to go to him for information of a disaster which was already known to every one in Douai.

Pierquin told her that in all probability large sums were owing to the firm which supplied her husband with chemicals. This firm, after making inquiries, had executed all M. Claes' orders without hesitation, and let him have unlimited credit. Mme. Claes commissioned Pierquin to ask them for an account of the goods supplied to her husband. Two months later, MM. Protez and Chiffreville, manufacturing chemists, sent in a statement by which it appeared that a hundred thousand francs were owing to them.

Mme. Claes and Pierquin studied the document with amazement that increased with each fresh item. Among enigmatical entries, commercial expressions, and undecipherable scientific hieroglyphs, it gave them a shock to find mention of diamonds and precious metals, albeit in small quantities, and of mysterious substances, apparently so difficult to procure or to produce that they were enormously valuable. The vast number of different items, the cost of carriage and of packing valuable scientific instruments and delicately adjusted machinery for transit, the expense of all the apparatus, together with the fact that many of the chemical compounds had been specially prepared by M. Claes' directions, accounted sufficiently for the startling amount of the total.

In the interests of his cousin, the notary made inquiries concerning MM. Protez and Chiffreville, and the accounts which he received of them convinced him that they had been

perfectly honest in their dealings with M. Claes; indeed, they had been more than honest, they had gone out of their way to keep him informed of the discoveries of Parisian chemists in order to save him expense.

Mme. Claes entreated Pierquin to keep the singular nature of these transactions a secret. If they were known in the town, all Douai would say at once that her husband was mad. But Pierquin told her that this was impossible; that he had obtained all possible delay already; and that as the bills for such large amounts had been formally noted, the secret was not in his keeping. He laid bare the whole extent of the wound, telling his cousin that if she could not contrive to prevent her husband from squandering his money in this reckless way, the family estates would be mortgaged up to their value in less than six months. As to making any effort himself, he added that he, Pierquin, had spoken to his cousin on the subject, with due deference, more than once, and that it had been utterly useless. Balthazar had answered once for all that in all his researches his object was to make a fortune and a famous name for his family. So in addition to the anguish which had clutched at Josephine's heart for the past two years—a cumulative torture, in which every sad or happy memory of the past added to the pain of the present—she was to know a horrible unceasing dread of worse to follow, of an appalling future.

A woman's presentiments are often marvelously correct. How is it that women fear so far oftener than they hope in all matters relating to this present life? Why do they reserve all their faith for religious beliefs in a future world? How is it that they are so quick to discern coming trouble or any turning-point in our career? Perhaps the very closeness of the tie that binds a woman to the man she loves makes her an admirable judge of his capacity, and with the instinct of love she estimates his faculties and knows his tastes, his passions, his faults, and good qualities. She is always studying these sources of man's destiny, and with the intimate knowledge of the causes comes the fatal gift of foreseeing their effects

under all conceivable conditions. Women derive their insight into the Future from their clear-sightedness in such things as they see in the Present, and the accuracy of their forecasts is due to the perfection of their nervous organization, which enables them to detect and interpret the slightest sign of thought or feeling. They feel the great storms that shake another soul, and every fibre in them vibrates in harmony. They feel or they see. And Mme. Claes, though estranged from her husband for two years, felt that the loss of their fortune was impending.

In Balthazar's passionate persistence she had seen the reflection of his fiery enthusiasm. If it were true that he was trying to discover the secret of making gold, he would certainly fling his last morsel of bread into the crucible with perfect indifference; but what was he seeking to discover?

So far she had loved husband and children without attempting to distinguish the claims of either upon her heart. Balthazar had loved the children as she did; the children had never come between them. Now, all at once she discovered that she was at times more a mother than a wife, as heretofore she had been a wife rather than a mother. Yet she felt that she was ready even yet to sacrifice herself, her fortune, and her children to the welfare of the man who had loved and chosen and adored her, the man for whom she was still the only woman in the world; and then came remorse that she should love her children so little, and despair at being placed between two hideous alternatives. Her heart suffered as a wife, as a mother she suffered in her children, and as a Christian she suffered for it all. She said nothing of the terrible conflict in her soul. After all, her husband was the sole arbiter of their fate; he was the master who must shape their destinies; he was accountable to God and to none other. How could she reproach him with putting her fortune to such uses, after the disinterestedness which had been so amply proved during the first ten years of their married life? Was she a judge of his designs? And yet her conscience asserted what she knew to be in keeping with all laws written and unwritten,

that parents possess their fortune not for themselves, but for their children, and have no right to alienate the worldly wealth which they hold in trust for them.

Rather than take it upon herself to solve these intricate problems, she had chosen to shut her eyes to them; like a man on the brink of a precipice, who will not look into the yawning depths into which he knows that he must sooner or later fall.

For the past six months her husband had allowed her nothing for housekeeping expenses. The magnificent diamonds which her brother had given to her on the day of her marriage had been secretly sold in Paris, and she had put the whole household on the most economical footing. She had dismissed the children's governess, and even little Jean's nurse. Formerly the luxury of a carriage had been quite unknown among the Flemish burghers, who lived so simply and held their heads so high. So there had been no provision in the Maison Claes itself for this modern innovation, and Balthazar had been obliged to have his stables and coach-house on the opposite side of the street. Since he had been absorbed in chemistry he had ceased to superintend that part of the ménage, essentially a man's province, and Mme. Claes put down the carriage. She was so much of a recluse that the expense was as useless as it was heavy; and this would have been reason sufficient to give for her retrenchments, but she did not attempt to give color to them by any pretexts. Hitherto, facts had given the lie to her words, and now silence became her best.

Such changes as these, moreover, were almost inexcusable in Holland, where any one who lives up to his income is looked on as a madman. Only as her oldest girl, Marguerite, was now nearly sixteen years old, Josephine would wish her to make a great match, it was thought, and to establish her in the world in a manner befitting the daughter of the house of Claes, connected as it was with the Molinas, the Van Ostrom-Temnincks, and the Casa-Reals. The money realized by the sale of the diamonds had been exhausted some few days

before the opening scene of this story. On that very afternoon, as Mme. Claes had met Pierquin on her way to vespers with her children, he had turned and walked with them as far as the Church of Saint Pierre, talking confidentially the while.

"It would be a breach of the friendship which attaches me to your family," he said, "if I were to attempt to conceal from you, cousin, the risks you are running. I must implore you to set them before your husband. Who else has influence sufficient to arrest him on the brink of the precipice? Your estates are so heavily mortgaged that they will scarcely pay interest on the sums borrowed. At this moment you have no income whatever. If you once cut down the woods, your last hope of salvation will be gone. Cousin Balthazar owes thirty thousand francs to Protez and Chiffreville in Paris; how will you pay them? How are you going to live? And what will become of you if Claes keeps on buying acids and alkalis, and glassware, and voltaic batteries, and such like gimcracks? All your fortune has flown off in gas and smuts; you have nothing but the house and the furniture left. A couple of days ago there was some talk of mortgaging the house itself, and what do you think Claes said?—'The devil!' —'Tis the first sign of sense he has shown these three years."

Mme. Claes in her distress clutched Pierquin's arm. "Keep our secret!" she entreated, raising her eyes to heaven.

The words had fallen like a thunderbolt. She sat quietly on her chair among her children, so overcome that she could not pray. Her prayer-book lay open on her knee, but she never turned a leaf; her painful thoughts were as all-absorbing as her husband's musings. The sounds of the organ fell on her ears, but Spanish pride and Flemish integrity sent louder echoes through her soul. The ruin of her children was complete! She could no longer hesitate between their claims and their father's honor. The immediate prospect of a collision with Claes appalled her; he was so great in her eyes, so much above her, that the bare idea of his anger was scarcely less fearful than the thought of the wrath of God. She could

no longer be so devoutly submissive, a change had come over her life. For her children's sake she must thwart the wishes of the husband whom she idolized.

His thoughts soared among the far-off heights of science, but she must bring him down to the problems of everyday existence; must break in upon his dreams of a fair future, and confront him with the present in its most prosaic aspect, with practical details revolting to artists and great men. For his wife, Balthazar Claes was a giant intellect, a man whose greatness the world would one day recognize; he could only have forgotten her for the most splendid hopes; and then he was so able, so wise and far-seeing, she had heard him speak so well on so many subjects, that she felt no doubt that he spoke the truth when he said that his researches were to bring fame and fortune to them all. His love for his wife and children was not only great, it was boundless; how could such love come to an end? Doubtless it was stronger and deeper than ever, it was only the form that was changed; and she who was so nobly disinterested, so generous and sensitive, must continually sound the word "money" in the great man's ears; must make him see poverty in its ugliest shape, and the rattle of coin and cries of distress must break in on the sweet voices that sang of fame.

And suppose that Balthazar's affection for her should grow less? Ah! if she had had no children, how bravely and gladly she would have faced the change he had wrought in her destiny! Women who have been brought up amid wealthy surroundings soon feel the emptiness of the life that luxury may disguise, but cannot fill; it palls on them, but their hearts are not seared; and when once they have discovered for themselves the happiness that lies in a constant interchange of sincere feeling and thought, when they are certain of being loved, they do not shrink from a narrow monotonous existence, if only that existence is the one best suited to the being who loves them. All their own ideas and pleasures are subordinated to the lightest demands of that life without their

own; and the future holds but one dread for them—the dread of separation.

At this moment Pepita felt that her children stood between her and her real life, as science had separated Balthazar Claes from her. When she returned from vespers she flung herself down in her low chair, dismissed the children with a caution to make no noise, and sent to ask her husband to come to speak with her; but in spite of the insistence of the old man-servant Lemulquinier, Balthazar had not stirred from his laboratory. Mme. Claes had time to think over her position, and had fallen into deep musings, forgetful of the hour and the day. The thought that they owed thirty thousand francs which they could not pay roused painful memories; all the troubles of the past started up to meet the troubles of the present and the future. She was overwhelmed by the problem, the burden grew too heavy for her, and she gave way to tears.

When Balthazar came at last, he looked more abstracted, more formidable, more distraught than she had ever seen him; and when he gave her no answer, she sat for a while like one fascinated by the vacant unseeing gaze; the remorseless thoughts that had wrung drops of sweat from his brow seemed to exert a spell over her also. With the first shock came the wish that she might die. But the scientific inquiry made in those absent tones roused her courage just as her heart began to fail her; she would grapple with this hideous and mysterious power which had robbed her of her lover, her children of their father, and the family of their wealth, and had overclouded all her happiness. Yet she could not help trembling, shudder after shudder ran through her; was it not the most solemn moment of her life—a moment that held all her future—as it was the outcome of all her past?

And at this point, weak-minded people, timid souls, or those who, sensitive by nature, are prone to exaggerate little trials of life, men who, in spite of themselves, feel a nervous tremor when she stood before the arbiters of their fate, may readily imagine the thoughts that crowded up in her mind. Her brain reeled, and her heart grew heavy with pent-up

emotion, as she saw her husband go slowly towards the garden door. Few women have not known the misery of such inward debates as hers, so that even those whose hearts have not throbbed violently over a confession of extravagance, or of debts to their dressmaker, will have some faint idea of how terribly the pulse beats when life is at stake. A pretty woman can fling herself at her husband's feet, the graceful attitudes of her sorrow can plead for her, but Mme. Claes was painfully conscious of her deformity, and this added to her fears. When she saw Balthazar about to leave her, her first impulse had been to spring to his side, but a cruel thought restrained her. How could she rise and stand before him? She would appear ridiculous in the eyes of a man who had lost the old illusions of love, and now would see her as she was. Rather than lose one tittle of her power, Josephine would have lost fortune and children. She would avoid all possible evil influences at this crisis.

"Balthazar!"

He started at the sound of her voice and coughed. Then, without paying any attention to his wife, he turned in the direction of one of the small square spittoons which are placed at intervals along the wainscot in all Dutch and Flemish houses; the force of old habit and association was so strong in him that the man, who was hardly conscious of the existence of human beings, was always careful of the furniture. This curious trait was a source of intolerable pain to poor Josephine, who could not understand it; at this moment she lost command over herself, and her agony of mind drew from her a sharp cry of suffering, an exclamation in which all her wounded feelings found expression.

"Monsieur! I am speaking to you!"

"What does that signify?" answered Balthazar, turning round abruptly, and giving his wife a quick glance. The hasty words fell like a thunderbolt.

"Forgive me, dear. . ." she said, with a white face. She tried to rise to her feet, and held out her hand to him, but sank back again exhausted.

"This is killing me!" she said, in a voice broken by sobs.

The sight of tears brought a revulsion in Balthazar, as in most absent-minded people; it was as if a sudden light had been thrown for him on the mystery of this crisis. He took up Mme. Claes at once in his arms, opened a door which led into the little ante-chamber, and sprang up the staircase so hastily that his wife's dress caught on one of the carved dragon's heads of the balusters; there was a sharp sound, and a whole breadth was torn away. He kicked open the door of a little room into which their apartments opened, and found that the door of his wife's room was locked. He set Josephine gently down in an armchair, saying to himself, "Good heavens! where is the key?"

"Thank you, dear," said Mme. Claes, as she opened her eyes. "It is a long while since I have felt so near to your heart."

"Great heavens!" cried Claes. "Where is the key? There are the servants——"

Josephine signed to him to take the key which hung suspended from a riband at her side. Balthazar opened the door and hastily laid his wife on the sofa; then he went out to bid the startled servants remain downstairs, ordered them to serve dinner at once, and hurried back to his wife.

"What is it, dear heart?" he asked, seating himself beside her. He took her hand and kissed it.

"It is nothing," she said; "the pain is over now, only I wish that I had God's power, and could pour all the gold in the world at your feet."

"Why gold?" he asked, as he drew his wife to him, held her tightly in his arms, and kissed her again on the forehead. "Dearest love, do you not give me the greatest of all wealth, loving me as you do?"

"Oh! Balthazar, why should you not put an end to all this wretchedness, as your voice just now dispelled the trouble in my heart? You are not changed at all; I see that now."

"Wretchedness? What do you mean, dearest?"

"We are ruined, dear."

"Ruined?" he echoed. He began to smile, and fondly stroked the hand which lay in his. When he spoke again there was an unaccustomed tenderness in his voice.

"To-morrow, dearest, we may find ourselves possessed of inexhaustible wealth. Yesterday, while trying to discover far greater secrets, I think I found out how to crystallize carbon, the very substance of the diamond. . . . Oh! dear wife, in a few days' time, you will forgive me for my wandering wits; for they are apt to wander at times, it seems. I spoke hastily just now, did I not? But you will make allowances for me, the thought of you is always present with me, and my work is all for you, for us——"

"That is enough," she said; "we will say no more now, dear. This evening we will talk over it all. My trouble seemed more than I could bear, and now joy is almost too much for me."

She had not thought to see the old tender expression in his face, to hear such gentle tones again in his voice, to recover all that she thought she had lost.

"Certainly," he said. "Let us talk it over this evening. If I should grow absorbed in something else, remind me of my promise. I should like to forget my calculations this evening, and to surround myself with family happiness, with the pleasures of the heart, for I need them, Pepita, I am longing for them."

"And will you tell me what you are trying to discover, Balthazar?"

"Why, you would not understand it at all if I did, poor little one."

"That is what you think? But for these four months past I have been reading about chemistry, dear, so that I could talk about it with you. I have read Fourcroy, Lavoisier, Chaptal, Nollet, Rouelle, Berthollet, Gay-Lussac, Spallanzani, Leuwenhoek, Galvani, Volta,—all the books in fact about this science that you adore. Come, you can tell me your secrets now."

"Oh! you are an angel!" cried Balthazar, falling on his

knees beside his wife, and shedding tears that made her tremble. "We shall understand each other in everything!"

"Ah!" she said. "I would fling myself into your furnace fire to hear such words from you, to see you as you are now."

She heard her daughter's footsteps in the next room, and sprang hastily to the door.

"What is it, Marguerite?" she asked of her eldest girl.

"M. Pierquin is here, mother dear. You forgot to give out the table-linen this morning, and if he stays to dinner——"

Mme. Claes drew a bunch of small keys from her pocket and gave them to her daughter, indicating as she did so the cupboards of foreign woods which lined the ante-chamber.

"Take it from the Graindorge linen," she said, "on the right-hand side."

"As this dear Balthazar of mine is to come back to me to-day, I should like to have him all complete," she said, going back to the room with mischievous sweetness in her eyes. "Now, dear, go to your room, and do me a favor—dress for dinner, as Pierquin is here. Just change those ragged clothes of yours. Only look at the stains! And is it muriatic or sulphuric acid which has burned those holes with the yellow edges? Go and freshen yourself up a little; as soon as I have changed my dress, I will send Mulquinier to you."

Balthazar tried to pass into his room by the door which opened into it, forgetting that it was locked on the other side. He was obliged to go out through the ante-chamber.

"Marguerite," called Mme. Claes, "leave the linen on the armchair there, and come and help me to dress; I would rather not have Martha."

Balthazar had laid his hand on Marguerite's shoulder, and turned her towards him, saying merrily:

"Good-evening, little one! You are very charming to-day in that muslin frock and rose-colored sash."

He grasped Marguerite's hand in his, and kissed her forehead.

"Mamma!" cried the girl, as she went into her mother's

room, "papa kissed me just now, and he looked so pleased and happy!"

"Your father is a very great man, dear child; he has been working for three years that his family may be rich and illustrious, and now he feels sure that he has reached the end of his ambitions. To-day should be a great day for us all."

"We shall not be alone in our joy, mamma dear; all the servants were sorry, too, to see him look so gloomy. . . . Oh! not that sash, it is so limp and faded."

"Very well, but we must be quick. I must go down and speak to Pierquin. Where is he?"

"In the parlor; he is playing with Jean."

"Where are Gabriel and Félicie?"

"I hear their voices out in the garden."

"Well, then, just run away downstairs and see after them, or they will pick the tulips; your father has not even seen the tulips all this year, perhaps he would like to go out and look at them after dinner. And tell Mulquinier to take everything your father wants up to his room."

When Marguerite had left her, Mme. Claes went to the window and looked out at her children playing below in the garden. They were absorbed in watching one of those gleaming insects with green, gold-bespangled wings that are popularly called "diamond beetles."

"Be good, my darlings," she said, throwing up the window sash to let the fresh air into the room. Then she tapped gently on the door that opened into her husband's apartments, to make sure that he was not lost once more in a waking dream. He opened it, and when she saw that he was dressing, she said merrily:

"You will not leave me to entertain Pierquin all by myself for long, will you? You will come down as soon as you can?" and she tripped away downstairs so lightly that a stranger hearing her footsteps would not have thought that she was lame. Half-way down the staircase, she met Lemulquinier.

"When monsieur carried madame upstairs," said the man, "her dress was torn by one of the balusters; not that the scrap

of stuff matters at all, but the dragon's head is broken, and I do not know who is to mend it. It quite spoils the staircase; such a handsome piece of carving as it was too!"

"Pshaw! Mulquinier, do not have it mended; it is not a misfortune."

"Not a misfortune?" said Mulquinier to himself. "How is that? What has happened? Can the master have discovered the Absolute?"

"Good-day, M. Pierquin," said Mme. Claes, as she opened the parlor door.

The notary hastened to offer his arm to his cousin, but she never took any arm but her husband's, and thanked him by a smile, as she said, "Perhaps you have come for the thirty thousand francs?"

"Yes, madame. When I reached home I found a memorandum from MM. Protez and Chiffreville, who have drawn six bills, each for five thousand francs, on M. Claes."

"Very well," she answered; "say nothing to-day about it to Balthazar. Stay and dine with us; and if he should happen to ask why you have called, please invent some plausible excuse. Let me have the letter; I will tell him about this affair myself. It will be all right," she went on, seeing the notary's astonishment; "in a very few months my husband will probably pay back all the money which he has borrowed."

The last phrase was spoken in a low voice. The notary meanwhile watched Mlle. Claes, who was coming from the garden, followed by Gabriel and Félicie.

"I have never seen Mlle. Marguerite look so charming," he said.

Mme. Claes, sitting in her low chair, with little Jean on her knees, raised her face and looked from her daughter to the notary with seeming carelessness.

Pierquin was neither short nor tall, stout nor thin; he was good-looking in a commonplace way, with a discontented rather than melancholy expression; it was not a thoughtful face in spite of its vague dreaminess. He had a name for being

a misanthrope, but he had an excellent appetite, and was too anxious to get on in the world to stand very far aloof from it. He had a trick of gazing into space, an attitude of indifference, a carefully cultivated talent for silence, which seemed to indicate profound depths of character; but which, as a matter of fact, served to conceal the shallowness and insignificance of a notary whose whole mind was entirely absorbed by material interests. He was still sufficiently young to be emulous and ambitious; the prospect of marrying into the Claes family would have been quite enough to call forth all his zeal, even if he had had no ulterior motive in the shape of avarice, but he was not prepared to act a generous part until he knew his position exactly. When Claes seemed to be in a fair way to ruin himself, the notary grew stiff, curt, and uncompromising as an ordinary man of business; but as soon as he suspected that something after all might come of his cousin's work, he at once became affectionate, accommodating, almost officious; and yet he never sounded his own motives for these naïve changes of manner. Sometimes he looked on Marguerite as an Infanta, a princess to whose hand a poor notary dared not aspire; sometimes she was only a penniless girl, who might think herself lucky if Pierquin condescended to make her his wife. He was a thorough provincial and a Fleming; there was no harm in him; but his transparent selfishness neutralized his better qualities, as his personal appearance was spoiled by his absurd affectations.

As Mme. Claes looked at the notary she remembered the curt way in which he had spoken that day in the porch of St. Peter's Church, and noticed the change in his manner wrought by this evening's conversation. She read the thoughts in the depths of his heart, and gave a keen glance at her daughter, but evidently there was no thought of her cousin in the girl's mind. A few minutes were spent in discussing town talk, and then the master of the house came down from his room. His wife had heard him moving about in the room above with indescribable pleasure, his step was so quick and light that she pictured Claes grown youthful

again, and awaited his coming with such eagerness that in spite of herself a quiver of excitement thrilled her as he came down the staircase.

A moment later Balthazar entered, dressed in a costume of that day. His high boots, reaching almost to the knee, were carefully polished, the tops were turned down, leaving white silk stockings visible. He wore blue kerseymere breeches, fastened with gold buttons, a white-flowered waistcoat, and a blue dress-coat. He had shaved himself and combed and perfumed his hair, his nails had been pared, and his hands washed with so much care that any one who had seen him an hour before would hardly have recognized him again. Instead of an old man almost in his dotage, his wife and children and the notary beheld a man of forty, with an irresistible air of kindliness and courtesy. His face was thin and worn, but the hardness and sharpness of outline, which told a tale of weariness and strenuous labor, gave a certain air of refinement to his face.

"Good-day, Pierquin," said Balthazar Claes.

The chemist had become a father and husband again. He took up his youngest child and tossed him up and down.

"Just look at the youngster," he said to the notary. "Doesn't a pretty child like this make you wish you were married? Take my word for it, my dear boy, family pleasures make up for everything——

"Brr!" he cried, as Jean went up to the ceiling. "Down you come," and he set the child on the floor. Gleeful shrieks of laughter broke from the little one as he found himself so high in the air one moment and so low the next. The mother looked away lest any one might see how deeply she was moved by this game of play. It was such a little thing, yet it meant a revolution in her life.

"Now let us hear how you are getting on," said Balthazar, depositing his son upon the polished floor, and flinging himself into an easy-chair; but the little one ran to him at once; some glittering gold buttons peeped out above his father's high boots in a quite irresistible way.

"You are a darling!" said his father, taking him in his arms, "a Claes every inch of you! You run straight.—Well, Gabriel, and how is Père Morillon?" he said to his eldest son, as he pinched the boy's ear. "Do you manage to hold your own manfully against exercises and Latin translations? Do you keep a good grip on your mathematics?"

Balthazar rose and went over to Pierquin with the courteous friendliness which was natural to him. "Perhaps you have something to ask me, my dear fellow?" he said, as he took the notary's arm and drew him out into the garden, adding as they went, "Come and have a look at my tulips."

Mme. Claes looked after her husband, and could scarcely control her joy. He looked so young, so kindly, so much himself again. She too rose from her chair, put her arm round her daughter's waist, and kissed her.

"Dear Marguerite," she said; "darling child, I love you more than ever to-day."

"Papa has not been so nice for a long, long time."

Lemulquinier came to announce that dinner was served. Mme. Claes took Balthazar's arm before Pierquin could offer his a second time, and the whole family went into the dining-room.

Overhead the beams and rafters had been left visible in the vaulted ceiling, but the woodwork was cleaned and carefully polished once a year, and the intervening spaces were adorned with paintings. Tall oak sideboards lined the room, the more curious specimens of the family china were arranged on the tiers of shelves, the purple leather which covered the walls were stamped with designs in gold, representing hunting scenes. Here and there above the sideboards a group of foreign shells, or the bright-colored feathers of rare tropical birds, glowed against the sombre background.

The chairs were the square-shaped kind with twisted legs and low backs covered with fringed stuff, which once were found in every household all over France and Italy. In one of these Raphael seated his "Madonna of the Chair." They had not been changed since the beginning of the sixteenth

century, and the framework was black with age, but the gold-headed nails shone as if they were new only yesterday, and the stuff, carefully renewed from time to time, was a rich deep red. The Flanders of the sixteenth century, with its Spanish innovations, seemed to have risen out of the past.

The wine flasks and decanters on the table preserved in their bulb-shaped outlines the grace and dignity of antique vases; the glasses were the same old-fashioned goblets with long, slender stems that are seen in old Dutch pictures. The English earthenware was decorated with colored figures in high relief, Wedgwood's ware and Palissy's designs. The silver was massive, square-sided, and richly ornamented; it was in a very literal sense family plate, for no two pieces were alike, and the rise and progress of the fortunes of the house of Claes might have been traced from its beginnings in the varying styles of these heirlooms.

It will readily be imagined that a Claes would make it a point of honor to have table-linen of the most magnificent kind, and the table-napkins were fringed in the Spanish fashion. The splendors locked away in the state apartments only came to light to grace festival days; their glories were never dimmed, so to speak, by familiarity. This was the linen, plate, and earthenware in daily use, and everything in the quarter of the house where the family lived bore the stamp of a patriarchal quaintness. Add one more charming detail to complete the picture—a vine clambering about the windows set them in a framework of green leaves.

"You are faithful to old traditions, madame," said Pierquin, as he received a plateful of thymy soup, in which there were small rissolettes made of meat and fried bread, according to the approved Dutch and Flemish recipe, "this is the kind of soup that always made part of the Sunday dinner in our father's time; it has been a standing dish in the Low Countries for ages, but I never meet with it now except here and in my uncle Des Raquet's house. Oh! stay a moment though, old M. Savaron de Savarus at Tournai still takes a pride in having it served, but old Flemish ways

are rapidly disappearing. Furniture must be *à la grecque* nowadays; there are classical bucklers, lances, helmets, and fasces on every mortal thing. Everybody is rebuilding his house, selling his old furniture, melting down his plate, or getting rid of it for Sèvres porcelain, which is nothing like as beautiful as old Dresden or Oriental china. Oh! I myself am a Fleming to the backbone. It goes to my heart to see coppersmiths buying up beautiful old furniture at the price of firewood for the sake of the metal in the wrought-incrusted copperwork, or the pewter inlaid in it. Society has a mind to change its skin, I suppose, but the changes are more than skin deep; we are losing the faculty of producing along with the old works of art. There is not time to do anything conscientiously when every one lives in such a hurry. The last time I was in Paris I was taken to see the pictures exhibited in the Louvre, and, upon my honor, they are only fit for fire-screens! Yards of canvas with no atmosphere, no depth of tone. Painters really seem to be afraid of their colors. And they intend, so they say, to upset our old school. . . . Heaven help them!"

"Our old masters used to study their pigments," said Balthazar; "they used to test them singly and in combinations, submitting them to the action of sunlight and rain. Yes, you are right; nowadays the material resources of art receive less attention than formerly."

Mme. Claes was not listening to the conversation. The notary's remark that china had come into fashion had set her thoughts wandering, and a bright idea had at once occurred to her. She would sell the massive silver plate which her brother had left her; perhaps in that way she might pay the thirty thousand francs.

Presently her husband's voice sounded through her musings. "Aha!" Balthazar was saying, "so they talk about my studies in Douai?"

"Yes," answered Pierquin, "everybody is wondering what it is that you are spending so much money over. I heard the First President, yesterday, lamenting that a man of your

ability should set out to find the philosopher's stone. I took it upon myself to reply that you were too learned not to know that it would be attempting the impossible, too good a Christian to imagine that you could prevail over God, and that a Claes was far too shrewd to give hard cash for powder of pimperlimpimp. Still, I must confess that I share in the regret that is generally felt over your withdrawal from society. You really might be said to be lost to the town. Indeed, madame, you would have been pleased if you knew how highly every one spoke of you and of M. Claes."

"It was very kind of you to put a stop to such absurd reports, which would make me ridiculous if no worse came of it," answered Balthazar. "Oh! so the good folk of Douai think that I am ruined! Very good, my dear Pierquin, on our wedding day, in two months' time, I will give a fête on a splendid scale, which shall reinstate me in the esteem of our dear money-worshiping fellow-townsmen."

The color rushed into Mme. Claes' face; for the past two years the anniversary had been forgotten. This evening was an interval in Balthazar's life of enthusiasm which might be compared to one of those lucid moments in insanity when the powers of the mind shine with unwonted brilliance for a little while; never had there been such point and pith and sparkle in his talk, his manner to his children had never been more playfully tender, he was a father once more, and no festival could have given his wife such joy as this. Once more his eyes sought hers with a constant expression of sympathy in them; she felt a delicious consciousness that the same feeling and the same thought stirred in the depths of either heart.

Old Lemulquinier seemed to have grown young again; seldom, indeed, had he been known to be in such spirits. The change in his master's manner had even more significance for him than for his mistress. Mme. Claes was dreaming of happiness, but visions of fortune filled the old serving man's brain, and his hopes were high. He had been wont to help with the mechanical part of the work, and perhaps some words let fall by his master when an experiment had


LEMULQUINIER
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Lemulquinier



failed, and the end seemed further and further off, had not been lost on the servant. Perhaps he had become infected with his master's enthusiasm, or an innate faculty of imitation had led Lemulquinier to assimilate the ideas of those with whom he lived. He regarded his master with a half-superstitious awe and admiration in which there was a trace of selfishness. The laboratory was for him very much what a lottery-office is for many people—hope organized. Every night as he lay down he used to say to himself, "To-morrow, who knows but we may be rolling in gold?" And in the morning he awoke with a no less lively faith.

He was a thorough Fleming, as his name indicated. In past ages the common people were distinguished merely by nicknames; a man was called after the place he came from, after his trade, or after some moral quality or personal trait. But when one of the people was enfranchised, his nickname became his family name, and was transmitted to his burgher descendants. In Flanders, dealers in flax thread were called *mulquiniers;* and the old valet's ancestor, who passed from serfdom into the burgher class, had, doubtless, dealt in linen thread. That had been some generations ago, and now the grandson of the dealer in flax was reduced to the old condition of servitude, albeit, unlike his grandsire, he received wages. The history of Flanders, its flax trade, its industries, and its commerce was in a manner epitomized in the old servant, who was often called Mulquinier for the sake of euphony.

There was something quaint in his appearance and character. In person he was tall and thin; his broad, triangular countenance had been so badly scarred by the smallpox that the white shiny seams gave it a grotesque appearance; the little tawny eyes, which exactly matched the color of his sleek, sandy perruque, seemed to look askance at everything. He stalked solemnly and mysteriously about the house; his whole bearing and manner excused the curiosity which he awakened. It was believed, moreover, that as an assistant in the laboratory he shared and kept his master's secrets, and he was in consequence invested with a sort of halo of romance. Dwell-

ers in the Rue de Paris watched him as he came and went, with an interest not unmixed with awe; for when questioned he was wont to deliver himself of Delphic utterances, and to throw out vague hints of fabulous wealth. He was proud of being necessary to his master, and exercised, on the strength of it, a petty tyranny over his fellow-servants, taking advantage of his position to make himself master below stairs. Unlike Flemish servants, who become greatly attached to the family they serve, he cared for no one in the house but Balthazar; Mme. Claes might be in trouble, some piece of good fortune might befall the household, but it was all one to Lemulquinier, who ate his bread and butter and drank his beer with an unmoved countenance.

After dinner, Mme. Claes suggested that they should take coffee in the garden beside the centre bed of tulips. The flowers had been carefully labeled and planted in pots, which were imbedded in the earth and arranged pyramid fashion, with a unique specimen of parrot-tulip at the highest point. No other collector possessed a bulb of the *Tulipa Claesiana*. Balthazar's father had many times refused ten thousand florins for this marvel, which had all the seven colors; the edges of its slender petals gleamed like gold in the sun. The older Claes had taken extraordinary precautions, keeping it in the parlor, lest by any means a single seed should be stolen from him, and had often passed entire days in admiring it. The stem was strong, elastic, erect, and a beautiful green color; the flower cup possessed the perfect form and pure brilliancy of coloring which were once so much sought after in these gorgeous flowers.

"Thirty or forty thousand francs' worth there!" was the notary's comment, as his eyes wandered from the mass of color to Mme. Claes' face; but she was too much delighted by the sight of the flowers, which glowed like precious stones in the rays of the sunset, to catch the drift of this business-like remark.

"What is the good of it all? you ought to sell them," Pierquin went on, turning to Balthazar.

"Pshaw! what is the money to me!" answered Claes, with the gesture of a man to whom forty thousand francs is a mere trifle.

There was a brief pause, filled by the children's exclamations.

"Do look at this one, mamma!"

"Oh, what a beauty!"

"What is this one called, mamma?"

"What an abyss for the human mind!" exclaimed Balthazar, clasping his hands with a despairing gesture. "One combination of hydrogen and oxygen, in different proportions, but under the same conditions, and all those different colors are produced from the same materials!"

The terms which he used were quite familiar to his wife, but he spoke so rapidly that she did not grasp his meaning; Balthazar bethought him that she had studied his favorite science, and said, making a mysterious sign, "You should understand that, but you would not yet understand all that I meant," and he seemed to relapse into one of his usual musing fits.

"I should think so," said Pierquin, taking the cup of coffee which Marguerite handed him. "Drive Nature out by the door and she comes in at the window," he went on, speaking to Mme. Claes in a low voice. "You will perhaps be so good as to speak to him yourself; the devil himself would not rouse him now from his cogitations. He will keep on like this till to-morrow morning, I suppose."

He said good-bye to Claes, who appeared not to hear a syllable, kissed little Jean in his mother's arms, made a profound bow to Mme. Claes, and went. As soon as the great door was shut upon the visitor, Balthazar threw his arm round his wife's waist, and dispelled all her uneasiness over his feigned reverie by whispering in her ear, "I knew exactly how to get rid of him!"

Mme. Claes raised her face to her husband without attempting to hide the happy tears which filled her eyes. Then she

let little Jean slip to the ground, and laid her head on Balthazar's shoulder.

"Let us go back to the parlor," she said after a pause.

Balthazar was in the wildest spirits that evening; he invented innumerable games for the children, and joined in them himself so heartily that he did not notice that his wife left the room two or three times. At half-past nine o'clock, when Jean had been put to bed, and Marguerite had helped her sister Félicie to undress, she came downstairs into the parlor and found her mother sitting in the low chair talking with her father, and saw that her hand lay in his. She turned to go without speaking, fearing to disturb her father and mother, but Mme. Claes saw her.

"Here, come here, Marguerite, dear child," she said, drawing the girl towards her, and kissing her affectionately. "Take your book with you to your room," she added, "and mind you go early to bed."

"Good-night, darling child," said Balthazar.

Marguerite gave her father a good-night kiss and vanished. Claes and his wife were left alone for awhile. They watched the last twilight tints fade away in the garden, the leaves turned black, the outlines grew dim and shadowy in the summer dusk. When it was almost dark, Balthazar spoke in an unsteady voice. "Let us go upstairs," he said.

Long before the introduction of the English custom of regarding a wife's apartment as a sort of inner sanctuary, a Flamande's room had been impenetrable. This is due to no ostentation of virtue on the part of the good housewives; it springs from a habit of mind acquired in early childhood, a household superstition which looks on a bedroom as a delicious sanctuary, where there should be an atmosphere of gentle thoughts and feelings, where simplicity is combined with all the sweetest and most sacred associations of social life.

Any woman in Mme. Claes' position would have done her best to surround herself with dainty belongings; but Mme. Claes had brought a refined taste to the task, and a knowledge

of the subtle influence which externals exert upon our moods. What would have been luxury for a pretty woman, was for her a necessity. "It is in one's own power to be a pretty woman," so another Josephine had said; but there had been something artificial in the grace of the wife of the First Consul, who had never lost sight of her maxim for a moment; Mme. Claes had understood its import, and was always simple and natural.

Familiar as the sight of his wife's room was to Balthazar, he was usually so unmindful of the things about him that a thrill of pleasure went through him, as if he saw it now for the first time. The vivid colors of the tulips, carefully arranged in the tall, slender porcelain jars, seemed to be part of the pageant of a woman's triumph, the blaze of the lights proclaimed it as joyously as a flourish of trumpets. The candle-light falling on the gridelin silken stuffs brought their pale tints into harmony with the brilliant surroundings, breaking the surface with dim golden gleams wherever it caught the light, shining on the petals of the flowers till they glowed like heaped-up gems. And these preparations had been made for him! It was all for him!

Josephine could have found no more eloquent way of telling him that he was the source of all her joys and sorrows. There was something deliciously soothing to the soul in this room, something that banished every thought of sadness, till nothing but the consciousness of perfect and serene happiness was left. The soft clinging perfume of the Oriental hangings filled the air without palling on the senses; the very curtains, so carefully drawn, revealed a jealous anxiety to treasure the lowest word uttered there, to shut out everything beyond from the eyes of him whom she had won back.

Mme. Claes drew the tapestry hangings across the door that no sound might reach them from without. Then, as she stood for a moment wrapped in a loose dressing-gown with deep frills of lace at the throat, her beautiful hair, black and glossy as a raven's wing, making a setting for her face, Josephine glanced with a bright smile at her husband, who

was sitting by the hearth. A witty woman, who at times grows beautiful when her soul passes into her face, can express irresistible hopes in her smile.

A woman's greatest charm consists in a constant appeal to a man's generosity, in a graceful admission of helplessness, which stimulates his pride and awakens his noblest feelings. Is there not a magical power in such a confession of weakness? When the rings had slid noiselessly over the curtain rod, she went towards her husband, laying her hand on a chair as though to find support, or to move more gracefully and dissemble her lameness. It was a mute request for help. Balthazar seemed lost in thought; his eyes rested on the pale olive face against its dusky background with a sense of perfect satisfaction; now he shook off his musings, sprang up, took his wife in his arms, and carried her to the sofa. This was exactly what she had intended.

"You promised," she said, taking his hands, which thrilled at her touch, "to let me into the secret of your researches. You must admit, dear, that I am worthy of the confidence, for I have been brave enough to study a science which the Church condemns, so that I may understand all that you say. But you must not hide anything from me; I am curious. And, first of all, tell me how it chanced that one morning you looked so troubled when I had left you so happy the evening before?"

"You are dressed so coquettishly to talk about chemistry?"

"No, dear, to learn a secret which will let me a little further into your heart; is not that the greatest of all joys for me? All the sweetness of life is comprised, and has its source, in a closer understanding between two souls. And now, when your love is wholly and solely mine, I want to know this tyrannous Idea which drew you away from me for so long. Yes, I am more jealous of a thought than of all the women in the world. Love is vast, but love is not infinite; and in science there are unfathomable depths; I cannot let you go forth into them alone. I hate everything that can come between us; some day the fame that you are seeking so

eagerly will be yours, and I shall be miserable. Fame would give you intense pleasure, would it not? and I alone should be the source of your pleasures, monsieur."

"No, dear angel, it was not a thought that set me on this glorious quest; it was a man."

"A man!" she cried aghast.

"Do you remember the Polish officer, Pepita, who spent a night here in our house in 1809?"

"Do I remember him? I am vexed with myself because I see his face so often—his bald head, the curling ends of his moustache, his sharp worn features, and those eyes of his, like flickering fires lit in hell, shining out of the coal-black hollows under his brows! There was something appalling in his listless mechanical way of walking! If all the inns had not been full, he certainly should never have spent the night here!"

"Well, that Polish gentleman was a M. Adam de Wierzchownia," answered Balthazar. "That evening, when you left us sitting in the parlor by ourselves, we fell somehow to talking about chemistry. He had been forced to relinquish his studies from poverty, and had become a soldier. If I remember rightly, it was over a glass of *eau sucrée* that we recognized each other as adepts. When I told Mulquinier to bring the sugar in lumps and not in powder, the captain gave a start of surprise.

" 'Have you ever studied chemistry?' he asked.

" 'Yes, with Lavoisier,' I told him.

" 'You are very lucky,' he exclaimed; 'you are rich, you are your own master——'

"He gave one of those groans that reveal a hell of misery hidden and locked away in a man's heart or brain, a sigh of suppressed and helpless rage of which words cannot give any idea, and completed his sentence with a glance that made me shudder. After a pause, he told me that, since what might me called the Death of Poland, he had taken refuge in Sweden, and there had sought consolation in the study of chemistry, which had always had an irresistible attraction for him.

" 'Well,' he added, 'I see that you have recognized, as I have, that if gum arabic, sugar, and starch are reduced to a fine powder, they are almost indistinguishable, and if analyzed, yield the same ultimate result.'

"There was a second pause. He eyed me keenly for awhile, then he spoke confidentially and in a low voice. To-day only the recollection of the general sense of those solemn words remains with me; but there was something so earnest in his tones, such fierce energy in his gestures, that every word seemed to vibrate through me, to be beaten into my brain with hammer-strokes. These, in brief, were his reasonings; for me they were like the coal which the seraphim laid on the lips of the prophet Isaiah, for after my studies with Lavoisier I could understand all that they meant.

" 'The ultimate identity of these three substances, to all appearance so different,' he went on, 'suggested the idea that all natural productions might be reduced to a single element. The investigations of modern chemistry have proved that this law holds good to a large extent. Chemistry classifies all creation under two distinct headings—Organic Nature and Inorganic Nature. Organic nature comprises every animal or vegetable growth, every organic structure however elementary, or, to speak more accurately, everything which possesses more or less capacity of motion, which is the measure of its sentient powers. Organic nature is therefore the most important part of our world. Now, analysis has reduced all the products of organic nature to four elements, three of which are gases—nitrogen, oxygen, and hydrogen; and the fourth, carbon, is a non-metallic solid.

" 'Inorganic nature, on the other hand—with so little diversity among its forms, with no power of movement or of sentience, destitute, perhaps, of the power of growth, conceded to it on insufficient grounds by Linnæus—inorganic nature numbers fifty-three simple bodies, and all its products are formed by their various combinations. Is it likely that the constituents should be most numerous when the results are so little various? My old master used to hold that there

was a single element common to all these fifty-three bodies, and that some unknown force, no longer exerted, brought about the apparent modifications; this unknown force, in his opinion, the human intellect might discover and apply once more. Well, then, imagine that force discovered and once more set in motion, chemistry would be the science of a single element.

"'Organic and inorganic nature are probably alike based upon four elements; but if we should succeed in decomposing nitrogen, for instance, which we may look upon as a negation, their number would be reduced to three. We are on the very verge of the Grand Ternary of the ancients—we, who are wont to scoff, in our ignorance, at the alchemists of the Middle Ages! Modern Chemistry has gone no further than this. It is much, and yet it is very little. Much has been accomplished, for chemistry has learned to shrink before no difficulties; little, because what has been accomplished is as nothing compared with what remains to do. 'Tis a fair science, yet she owes much to chance.

"'There is the diamond, for instance, that crystallized drop of pure carbon, the very last substance, one would think, that man could create. The alchemists themselves, the chemists of the Middle Ages, who thought that gold could be resolved into its different elements, and made up again from them, would have shrunk in dismay from the attempt to make the diamond. Yet we have discovered its nature and the law of its crystallization.

"'As for me,' he added, 'I have gone further yet! I have learned, from an experiment I once made, that the mysterious Ternary, which has filled men's imaginations from time immemorial, will never be discovered by any analytical process, for analysis tends in no one special direction. But, in the first place, I will describe the experiment. You take seeds of cress (selecting a single one from among the many substances of organic nature), and sow them in flowers of sulphur, which is a simple inorganic body. Water the seeds with distilled water, to make certain that no unknown element

mingles with the products of germination. Under these conditions the seeds will sprout and grow, drawing all their nourishment from elements ascertained by analysis. From time to time cut the cress and burn it, until you have collected a sufficient quantity of ash for your analysis; and what does it yield? Silica, alumina, calcic phosphate and carbonate, magnesia carbonate, potassic sulphate and carbonate, and ferric oxide; just as if the cress had sprung up in the earth by the waterside. Yet none of these substances are present in the soil in which the cresses grew; sulphur is a simple body, the composition of distilled water is definitely known; none of them exist in the seeds themselves. We can only suppose that there is one element common to the cress and its environment; that the air, the distilled water, the flowers of sulphur, and the various substances detected by an analysis of the calcined cress (that is to say, the potassium, lime, magnesia, alumina, and so forth) are all various forms of one common element, which is free in the atmosphere, and that the sun has been the active agent.

"'There can be no cavil as to this experiment,' he exclaimed, 'and thence I deduce the existence of the Absolute! One Element common to all substances, modified by a unique Force—that is stating the problem of the Absolute in its simplest form, a problem which the human intellect can solve, or so it seems to me.

"'You are confronted at the outset by the mysterious Ternary, before which humanity has knelt in every age—Primitive Matter, the Agency, and the Result. Throughout all human experience you will find the awful number Three, in all religions, sciences, and laws. And there," he said, "war and poverty put an end to my researches!

"'You are a pupil of Lavoisier's; you are rich, and can spend your life as you will, I will share my guesses at truth with you, the results of the experiments which gave me glimpses of the end to which research should be directed. The PRIMITIVE ELEMENT must be an element common to oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, and carbon; the AGENCY must

be the common principle of positive and negative electricity. If after inventing and applying test upon test you can establish these two theories beyond a doubt, you will be in possession of the First Cause, the key to all the phenomena of nature.

"'Oh! monsieur, when you carry *there,*' he said, striking his forehead, 'the last word of creation, a foreshadowing of the Absolute, can you call it living to be dragged hither and thither over the earth, to be one among blind masses of men who hurl themselves upon each other at a given signal without knowing why? My waking life is an inverted dream. My body comes and goes, does this and that, amid men and cannon, goes under fire, and marches across Europe at the bidding of a power which I despise; and I have no consciousness of it all. My inmost soul is rapt in the contemplation of one fixed idea, engrossed by one all-absorbing thought—the Quest of the Absolute; to detect the force that is seen at work when a few seeds, which cannot be told one from another, set under the same conditions, will spring up and blossom, and some flowers will be white and some will be yellow. You can see its mysterious operation in insects, by feeding silkworms, apparently alike in structure, on the same leaves, and some will spin a white, others a yellow cocoon; you can see it in man himself when his own children bear no resemblance to their father or mother. Hence, may we not logically infer that there is one Cause underlying these effects, beneath all the phenomena of nature? Is it not in conformity with all our thoughts of God to imagine that He has brought everything to pass by the simplest means?

"'The followers of Pythagoras of old adored the ONE whence issued the Many (their expression for the Primitive Element); men have reverenced the number Two, the first aggregation and type of all that follow; and in every age and creed the number THREE has represented God (that is to say, Matter, Force, and Result); through all these confused gropings of the human mind there is a dim perception of the Absolute! Stahl and Becher, Paracelsus and Agrippa,

all great seekers of occult causes, had for password *Trismegistus*—that is to say, the Grand Ternary. Ignorant people, who echo and re-echo the old condemnations of alchemy, that transcendental chemistry, have doubtless no suspicion that our discoveries justify the impassioned researches of those forgotten great men!

" 'Even when the secret of the Absolute is found, the problem of Movement remains to be grappled with. Ah me! while shot and shell are my daily fare, while I am commanding men to fling away their lives for nothing, my old master is making discovery on discovery, soaring higher and faster towards the Absolute. And I? I shall die, like a dog, in the corner of a battery! . . .'

"As soon as the poor great man had grown somewhat calmer, he said in a brotherly fashion that touched me:

" 'If I should think of any experiment worth making, I will leave it to you before I die.'

"My Pepita," said Balthazar, pressing his wife's hand, "tears of rage and despair coursed down his hollow cheeks as he spoke, and his words kindled a fire in me. Somewhat in this way Lavoisier had reasoned before, but Lavoisier had not the courage of his opinions . . ."

"Indeed!" cried Mme. Claes, interrupting, in spite of herself, "then it was this man who only spent one night under our roof that robbed us all of your affection; one phrase, one single word of his has ruined our children's happiness and our own? Oh! dear Balthazar, did he make the sign of the cross? Did you look at him closely? Only the Tempter could have those yellow eyes, blazing with the fire of Prometheus. Yes. Only the Fiend himself could have snatched you away from me; ever since that day you have been neither father nor husband nor head of the household——"

"What!" exclaimed Balthazar, springing to his feet, and looking searchingly at his wife, "do you blame your husband for rising above other men, that he may spread the divine purple of glory beneath your feet? a poor tribute compared with the treasures of your heart. Why, do you know what I

have achieved in these three years? I have made giant strides, my Pepita!" he cried, in his enthusiasm.

It seemed to his wife at that moment that the glow of inspiration lighted up his face as love had never done, and her tears flowed as she listened.

"I have combined chlorine and nitrogen; I have decomposed several substances hitherto believed to be elements; I have discovered new metals. Nay," he said, as he looked at his weeping wife, "I have decomposed tears. Tears are composed of a little phosphate of lime, chloride of sodium, mucus and water."

He went on speaking without seeing that Josephine's face was drawn and distorted with pain; he had mounted the winged steed of science, and was far from the actual world.

"That analysis, dear, is one of the strongest proofs of the theory of the Absolute. All life, of course, implies combustion; the duration of life varies as the fire burns rapidly or slowly. The existence of the mineral is prolonged indefinitely, for in minerals combustion is potential, latent, or imperceptible. In the case of many plants this waste is so constantly repaired through the agency of moisture, that their life seems to be practically endless; there are living vegetable growths which have been in existence since the last cataclysm. But when, for some unknown end, nature makes a more delicate and perfect piece of mechanism, endowing it with sentience, instinct, or intelligence (which mark three successive stages of organic development), the combustion of vitality in such organisms varies directly with the amount performed.

"Man, representing the highest point of intelligence, is a piece of mechanism which possesses the Faculty of Thought, one-half of creative power. And combustion is accordingly more intense in man than in any other animal organism; its effects may be in a measure traced by the presence of phosphates, sulphates, and carbonates in the system, which are revealed by analysis. What are these substances but traces of the action of electric fluid, the life-giving principle?

Should we not look to find the compounds produced by electricity in greater variety in man than in any other animal? Was it not to be expected that man would possess greater faculties for absorbing larger quantities of the Absolute Element, greater powers of assimilating it, an organization more perfectly adapted for converting it to his own uses, for drawing from it his physical force and his mental power? I am sure of it. Man is a matrass. In my opinion the idiot's brain contains less phosphorus, less of all the products of electro-magnetism, which are redundant in the madman; they are present in small quantities in the ordinary brain, and are found in their right proportion in the brain of the man of genius. The porter, the dancer, the universal lover, and the glutton misdirect the force stored up in their systems through the agency of electricity. Indeed, our sentiments——"

"That is enough, Balthazar! You terrify me; these are blasphemies. What, my love for you is——"

"Matter etherealized, and given off," answered Claes, "the secret doubtless of the Absolute. Only think of it! If I should be the first—I the first—if I find it out . . . if I find . . . if I find . . . !"

The words fell from him in three different tones of voice; his face gradually underwent a change; he looked like a man inspired.

"I will make metals, I will make diamonds; all that nature does I will do."

"Will you be any happier?" cried Josephine, in her despair. "Accursed science! Accursed fiend! You are forgetting, Claes, that this is the sin of pride by which Satan fell. You are encroaching on God!"

"Oh! Oh!"

"He denies God!" she cried, wringing her hands. "Claes, God wields a power which will never be yours."

At this slight on his beloved science Claes looked at his wife, and a quiver seemed to pass through him.

"What force?" he said.

"The one sole force—Movement. That is what I have gathered from the books I have read for your sake. You can analyze flowers, or fruit, or Malaga wine, and of course discover their exact chemical composition, and find elements in them which apparently are not to be found in the surroundings, as with that cress you spoke of; possibly by dint of effort you could collect those elements together, but would you make flowers, or fruit, or Malaga wine from them? Could you reproduce the mysterious action of the sun? of the Spanish climate? Decomposition is one thing, creation is another."

"If I should discover the compelling force, I could create."

"Nothing will stop him!" cried Pepita, with despair in her voice. "Oh, my love, love is slain. I have lost love . . ."

She burst into sobs, and through her tears her eyes seemed more beautiful than ever for the sorrow, and pity, and love that shone in them.

"Yes," she said, sobbing, "you are dead to everything else. I see it all. Science is stronger in you than you yourself; you have soared too far and too high; you can never drop to earth again to be the companion of a poor woman. What happiness could I give you now? Ah! I tried to believe that God had made you to show forth His works and to sing His praises; that this irresistible and tyrannous power had been set in your heart by God's own hand. It was a melancholy consolation. But, no. God is good; He would have left a little room in your heart for the wife who idolizes you, and the children over whom you should watch. The fiend alone could enable you to walk alone among those bottomless pits; in darkness, lighted not by faith in heaven, but by a hideous belief in your own powers! Otherwise, you would have seen, dear, that you had run through nine hundred thousand francs in three years. Ah! do me justice, my God on earth! I do not murmur at anything you do. If we had only each other, I would pour out both our fortunes at your feet; I would pray you to take it and fling it in your furnace, and laugh to see it vanish in curling smoke. Then, if we were poor,

I should not be ashamed to beg, so that you might have coal for your furnace fire. Oh! more than that, I would joyfully fling myself into it, if that would help you to find your execrable Absolute, since it seems that all your happiness and hopes are bound up in that unsolved riddle. But there are our children, Claes; what will become of our children if you do not find out this hellish secret very soon? Do you know why Pierquin came this evening? It was to ask for thirty thousand francs, a debt which we cannot pay. Your estates are yours no longer. I told him that you had the thirty thousand francs, to spare the awkwardness of answering the question he was certain to ask; and it has occurred to me that we might raise the money by selling our old-fashioned silver."

She saw the tears about to gather in her husband's eyes, flung herself at his feet, and raised her clasped hands imploringly in despair.

"Dearest," she cried, "if you cannot give up your studies, leave them for a little until we can save money enough for you to resume them again. Oh! I do not condemn them! To please you, I will blow your furnace fires; but do not drag our children down to poverty and want. You cannot love them surely any more; science has eaten away your heart, but you owe it to them to leave their lives unclouded, you must not leave them to a life of wretchedness. I have not loved them enough. I have often wished that I had borne no children, that so our souls might be knit more closely together, that I might share your inner life! And now, to stifle my remorse, I must plead my children's cause before my own."

Her hair had come unbound, and fell over her shoulders; all the thoughts that crowded up within her seemed to flash like arrows from her eyes. She triumphed over her rival. Balthazar caught her in his arms, laid her on the sofa, and sat at her feet.

"And it is I who have caused your grief?" he said, speaking like a man awakened from a painful dream.

"Poor Claes, if you hurt us, it was in spite of yourself," she said, passing her hand through his hair. "Come, sit here beside me," she added, pointing to a place on the sofa. "There! I have forgotten all about it, now that we have you again. It is nothing, dear, we shall retrieve all our losses; but you will not wander so far from your wife again? Promise me that you will not. My great, handsome Claes. You must let me exercise over that noble heart of yours the woman's influence that artists and great men need to soothe them in failure and disappointment. You must let me cross you sometimes, for your own good. I will never abuse the power, and you may answer sharply and grumble at me. Yes, you shall be famous, but you must be happy too. Do not put chemistry first. Listen! we will not ask too much; we will let science share your heart with us, but you must deal fairly, and our half of your heart must be really ours! Now, tell me, is not my unselfishness sublime?"

She drew a smile from Balthazar. With a woman's wonderful tact, she had changed the solemn tone of their talk, and brought the burning question into the domains of jest, a woman's own domain. But even with the laughter on her lips, something seemed to clutch tightly at her heart, and her pulse scarcely throbbed as evenly and gently as usual; but when she saw revived in Balthazar's eyes the expression which used to thrill her with delight and exultation, and knew that none of her old power was lost, she smiled again at him, as she said:

"Believe me, Balthazar, nature made us to feel; and though you will have it that we are nothing but an electrical mechanism, your gases and etherealized matter will never account for our power of foreseeing the future."

"Yes," he answered, "by means of affinities. The power of vision which makes the poet and the deductive power of the man of science are both based on visible affinities, though they are impalpable and imponderable, so that ordinary minds look on them as 'moral phenomena,' but in reality they are purely physical. Every dreamer of dreams sees and draws

deductions from what he sees. Unluckily, such affinities as these are too rare, and the indications are too slight to be submitted to analysis and observation."

"And this," she said, coming closer for a kiss, to put chemistry, which had returned so inopportunely at her question, to flight again, "is this to be an affinity?"

"No, a combination; two substances which have the same *sign* produce no chemical action."

"Hush! hush!" she said, "if you do not wish me to die of sorrow. Yes, dear, to see my rival always before me, even in the ecstasy of love, is more than I can bear."

"But, my dear heart, you are always in every thought of mine; my work is to make our name famous, you are the undercurrent of it all."

"Let us see; look into my eyes!"

Excitement had brought back all the beauty of youth to her face, and her husband saw nothing but her face above a mist of lace and muslin. "Yes, I did very wrong to neglect you for science. And, Pepita, when I fall to musing again, as I shall do, you must rouse me; I wish it."

Her eyes fell, and she let him take her hand, her greatest beauty, a hand that was at once strong and delicately shaped.

"But I am not satisfied yet," she said.

"You are so enchantingly lovely, that you can ask and have anything."

"I want to wreck your laboratory and bind this science of yours in chains," she said, fire flashing from her eyes.

"Well then, the devil take chemistry!"

"All my grief is blotted out by this moment," she said; "after this inflict any pain on me."

Tears came to Balthazar's eyes at the words.

"You are right," he said; "I only saw you through a veil, as it were, and I no longer heard you, it had come to that——"

"If I had been alone," she said, "I could have borne it in silence; I would not have raised my voice, my sovereign; but there were your sons to think of, Claes. Be sure of this,

that if you had dissipated all your fortune, even for a glorious end, your great motives would have weighed for nothing with the world, your children would have suffered for what the world would call your extravagance. It should be sufficient, should it not, for your far-seeing mind, if your wife calls your attention to a danger which you had not noticed? Let us talk no more about it," she added, smiling at him, with a bright light dancing in her eyes. "Let us not be only half happy this evening, Claes."

On the morrow of this crisis in the fortunes of the household, Balthazar Claes never went near his laboratory, and spent the day in his wife's society. Doubtless at Josephine's instance he had promised to relinquish his experiments. On the following day the family went to spend two months in the country, only returning to town to make preparations for the ball that had always been given in former years on the anniversary of their marriage.

Balthazar's affairs had become greatly involved, partly through debts, partly through neglect; every day brought fresh proof of this. His wife never added to his annoyance by reproaches; on the contrary, she did her utmost to meet and smooth over their embarrassments. There had been seven servants in their household on the occasion of their last "At Home," only three of them now remained—Lemulquinier, Josette the cook, and an old waiting-maid, Martha by name, who had been with her mistress ever since Mlle. Josephine left her convent. With so limited a retinue it was impossible to receive the aristocracy of Douai; but Mme. Claes, who was equal to the emergency, suggested that a chef should be sent for from Paris, that their gardener's son should be pressed into their service, and that they should borrow Pierquin's man. Nothing betrayed the straits they were in.

During the three weeks of preparation Mme. Claes kept her husband so cleverly employed that he did not miss his old occupations. She commissioned him to choose the flowers and exotic plants for the decoration of the staircase, the rooms, and the gallery; at another time she sent him to Dunkirk

to procure some of the huge fish, without which a Netherland banquet would be shorn of all its glory. A fête given by the Claes was a very important function, demanding a prodigious amount of forethought and a heavy correspondence; for in the Low Countries, where family traditions of hospitality are sedulously maintained, for masters and servants alike, a successful dinner is a triumph scored at the expense of the guests.

Oysters arrived from Ostend, fruit was sent for from Paris, and grouse from Scotland, no detail was neglected, the Maison Claes was to entertain on the old lavish scale. Moreover, the ball at the Maison Claes was a well-known social event with which the winter season opened in Douai, and Douai at that time was the chief town in the department. For fifteen years, therefore, it had behooved Balthazar to distinguish himself on this occasion; and so well had he acquitted himself as a host, that the ball was talked of for twenty leagues round. The toilettes, the invitations sent out, and any novelty that appeared even in the smallest details, were discussed all over the department.

This bustle of preparation left Claes little time for meditation on the Quest of the Absolute. His thoughts had been turned into other channels, old domestic instincts revived the dormant pride of the Fleming, the householder awoke, and the man of science flung himself heart and soul into the task of astonishing the town. He determined that some new refinement of art should give this evening a character of its own; and of all the whims of extravagance he chose the fairest, the costliest, and most fleeting, filling his house with scented thickets of rare plants, and preparing bouquets for the ladies. Everything was in keeping with this unprecedented luxury; it seemed as if nothing that could ensure success were lacking.

But the 29th Bulletin, bearing the particulars of the rout of the Grand Army and of the terrible passage of the Beresina, reached Douai that afternoon. The news made a deep

and gloomy impression on the Douaissens, and out of patriotism every one declined to dance.

Among the letters that reached Douai from Poland, there was one for Balthazar. It was from M. de Wierzchownia, who was at that moment in Dresden, dying of the wounds received in a recent engagement. Several ideas had occurred to him, he said, since they had spoken together of the Quest of the Absolute, and these ideas he desired to leave as a legacy to his host of three years ago. After reading the letter Claes fell into deep musings, which did honor to his patriotism; but his wife knew better, she saw that a second and deeper shadow had fallen over her festival. The glory of the Maison Claes seemed dimmed, as it were, by its approaching eclipse; there was a feeling of gloom in the atmosphere in spite of the magnificence, in spite of the display of all the treasures of bric-à-brac collected by six generations of amateurs, and now beheld for the last time by the admiring eyes of the Douaisiens.

The queen of the evening was Marguerite, who made her first appearance in society. All eyes were turned on her, partly because of her fresh simplicity and the innocent frankness of her expression, partly because the young girl seemed almost like a part of the old house. With the soft rounded contour of her face, the chestnut hair parted in the middle, and smoothed down on either side of her brow, clear hazel eyes, pretty rounded arms and plump yet slender form, she might have stepped out of the canvas of one of the old Flemish pictures on the wall. You could read indications of a firm will in the broad high forehead, gentle, shy, and sedate as she seemed; and though there was nothing sad or languid about her, there was but little girlish gleefulness in her face. Thoughtfulness there was, and thrift, and a sense of duty, all Flemish characteristics; and on a second glance, there was a certain charm of softness of outline and a meek pride which atoned for a lack of animation, and gave promise of domestic happiness. By some freak of nature, which physiologists as yet cannot explain, she bore no likeness to either father or

mother, but she was the living image of her maternal great-grandmother, a Conyncks of Bruges, whose portrait had been religiously preserved, and bore witness to the resemblance.

Supper gave some life to the ball. If the disasters that had befallen the Grand Army forbade the relaxation of dancing, no one apparently felt that the prohibition need apply to the pleasures of the table. Good patriots, however, left early, and only a few indifferent spirits remained, with some few card-players, and the intimate friends of the family. Little by little silence fell on the brilliantly lighted house, to which all Douai had been wont to flock, and by one o'clock in the morning the gallery was empty, the candles were extinguished in one salon after another, and the courtyard itself, so lately full of noises and lights, had settled down into its wonted darkness and gloom. It was like a foreshadowing of the future.

As soon as the Claes returned to their rooms, Balthazar gave his wife the Polish officer's letter to read; she gave it back to him mournfully, she foresaw the end.

From that day forth the tedium of his life began visibly to weigh on Balthazar's spirits. In the morning, after breakfast, he used to play with little Jean for a while in the parlor, and talked with the two girls, who were busy with their sewing, or embroidery, or lace-work; but he soon wearied of the play and of the talk, and everything seemed to be a set task. When his wife came down, having changed her wrapper for a morning dress, he was still sitting in the low chair, gazing blankly at Marguerite and Félicie; the rattle of their bobbins apparently did not disturb him. When the newspaper came, he read it deliberately through, like a retired tradesman at a loss how to kill time. Then he would rise to his feet, look at the sky for a while through the window panes, listlessly mend the fire, and sit down again in his chair, as if the tyrannous ideas within him had deprived him of all consciousness of his movements.

Mme. Claes keenly regretted her defective education and lack of memory. It was difficult for her to sustain an inter-

esting conversation; perhaps it is always difficult for two persons who have said everything to each other to find anything new to talk of unless they look for it among indifferent topics. The life of the heart has its moments, and wants contrasts; the practical questions of daily life are soon disposed of by energetic minds accustomed to make prompt decisions, and social frivolity is unendurable to two souls who love. Such souls, thus isolated, who know each other thoroughly, should seek their enjoyments in the highest regions of thought, for it is impossible to set something little against something that is vast. Moreover, when a man has dwelt for long on great subjects, he is not easy to amuse, unless there is something of the child in his nature, the power of flinging himself into the present moment, the simple fresh-heartedness that makes men of great genius such charming children; but is not this youthfulness of heart rare indeed among those who have set themselves to see and know and understand things?

During those months Mme. Claes tried all the expedients which love or necessity could suggest; she even learned to play backgammon, a game that had always presented insuperable difficulties to her mind; she tried to interest Balthazar in the girls' education, consulting him about their studies, planning courses of lessons; but all these resources came to an end at last, and Josephine and Balthazar were in something the same position as Mme. de Maintenon and Louis XIV. But Mme. de Maintenon could bring the pomps of power to her aid; she had wily courtiers who lent themselves to her comedies, playing their parts as ambassadors from Siam, and envoys from the grand Sophi, to divert a weary king; and Louis XIV., after draining the wealth of France, had known what it was to be reduced to a younger brother's shifts for raising money; he had outlived youth and success, and had come to know old age and failure, and, in spite of his grandeur, to a piteous sense of his own helplessness; and she, the royal *bonne,* who had soothed his children, was not always able to soothe their father, who had squandered wealth and power and human lives, who had given his life for vanity

and set God at naught, and was now paying the penalty of it all. But Claes was not suffering from exhaustion, but from unemployed energy.

One overwhelming thought possessed him. He was dreaming of the glories of science, of adding to the knowledge of the world, of fame that might have been his. He was suffering as a struggling artist suffers, like Samson bound to the pillars of the temple of the Philistines. So the result was much the same for the two sovereigns, though the intellectual monarch was suffering through his strength, and the other through his weakness.

What could Pepita do, unaided, for this kind of scientific nostalgia? At first she tried every means that family life afforded her, then she called society to the rescue, and gave two "cafés" every week. Cafés had recently superseded "teas" in Douai. At these social functions, the invited guests sipped the delicious wines and liqueurs with which the cellars always overflow in that favored land, drank their *café noir* or *café au lait frappé,* and partook of various Flemish delicacies; while the women sang ballads, discussed each other's toilettes, and retailed all the gossip of the town. It is just as it was in the time of Mieris or Terburg, always the same pictures, but some of the details are altered; the drooping scarlet feathers and gray high-crowned hats are wanting, and you miss the guitars and the picturesque costumes of the sixteenth century.

Balthazar made strenuous efforts to act his part as master of the house, but his constrained courtesy and forced animation left him in a state of languor, which showed but too plainly what inroads the malady had made, and these dissipations were powerless to alleviate the symptoms. Balthazar, on the brink of the precipice, might catch at branch after branch, but the fall, though delayed, was so much the heavier. He never spoke of his old occupations, he never uttered regrets, knowing that it was quite impossible to continue his work, but his voice and movements were languid, his vitality seemed to be at a low ebb. This depression could be seen even in the listless way in which he would take up the tongs, and build fantastic pyramids with the glowing coals.

It was a visible relief when the evening was over; sleep perhaps delivered him for a while from the importunities of thought; but with the morning came the thought that another day must be lived through, and he counted the hours of consciousness as an exhausted traveler might reckon out the leagues of desert that lie between him and his journey's end.

If Mme. Claes knew the causes of this weariness, she tried to shut her eyes to its effects; she would not see the havoc that it wrought. But though she might steel herself against the sight of his mental distress, his kindness of heart left her helpless. When Balthazar listened to Jean's laughter or the girls' chatter, and seemed all the while to hear an inner thought more plainly than his children's voices, Mme. Claes did not dare to ask him what that thought was; but when she saw him shake off his sadness, and try to seem cheerful, that he might not cast a gloom over others, his generosity made her falter in her purpose. His romps with little Jean and playful talk with the two little girls brought a flood of tears to poor Josephine's eyes, and she had to hurry from the room to hide her feelings; her heroism was costing her dear, it was breaking her heart. There were times when Mme. Claes longed to say, "Kill me, and do as you like!"

Little by little the fire seemed to die out of Balthazar's eyes, and the dull bluish hues of age crept over them. Everything seemed to be done with an effort; there was a dull hopelessness in the tones of his voice and in his manner even towards his wife. Towards the end of April things had grown so much worse that Mme. Claes took alarm. She had blamed herself bitterly and incessantly for having exacted this promise, while she admired the Flemish faith and loyalty with which it was kept. One day when Balthazar looked more depressed than ever, she hesitated no longer; she would sacrifice everything if so he might live.

"I give you back your word, dear," she said.

Balthazar looked at her in amazement.

"You are thinking of your experiments, are you not?" she went on.

He answered with a terrible readiness, by a gesture, but Mme. Claes had no thought of reproach; she had had time to sound the depths of the abyss into which they were both about to plunge together. She took his hand in hers and pressed it as she smiled at him.

"Thank you, dearest," she said, "I am sure of my power; you have given up what was dearer than life for my sake. Now it is my turn to give up. I have sold a good many of my diamonds, but there are some left, and with those that my brother gave me we could raise money enough for you to continue your experiments. I thought I would keep the jewels for our two girls, but your fame will more than make up for the sparkling stones, and besides, you will give them finer diamonds some day."

The sudden flash of joy over her husband's face was like a death-knell to Josephine's last hopes, and she saw with anguish that his passion was stronger than himself. Claes had a belief which enabled him to walk without faltering in a path which in his wife's eyes led by the brink of a precipice. He had this faith to sustain him, but to her who had no faith fell the heavier share of the burden; does not a woman always suffer for two? At this moment she chose to believe in his success, seeking thus to excuse herself for her share in the certain wreck of their fortunes.

"The love of my whole life would never repay your devotion, Pepita," said Claes, deeply moved.

He had scarcely spoken the words before Marguerite and Félicie came into the room to wish their father and mother good-morning. Mme. Claes looked down; for a moment she felt almost guilty before the two children; she felt that she had sacrificed their future to a wild delusion; but her husband took them on his knees and talked and laughed with them, because the joy he felt craved expression. Thenceforth Mme. Claes shared in her husband's life of enthusiasm. Science itself and desire of fame was everything to Claes; she not only sympathized with his aims, but all her hopes of her children's future were now bound up in his pursuits. Yet when her

director the Abbé de Solis had sold her diamonds for her in Paris, when packages began to arrive from the firm of manufacturing chemists, all the unhappy wife's peace of mind deserted her. It was as if the restless malevolent spirit that possessed her husband tormented her also, and she lived in constant and disquieting expectation. It was she who now sometimes sat like one dead all day long in her low chair, unable to act or to think from the very vehemence of her wishes. Balthazar was at work the while in his laboratory, but she had no outlet for her energies; the pent-up forces of her nature harassed her soul as doubts and fears. Sometimes she blamed herself for weakly humoring a passion which she felt convinced was hopeless; she would remember M. de Solis' censure, and rise from her chair and walk to the window, and look up at the laboratory chimney with dismay and dread. If a curl of smoke went up from it, she would watch it rise in despair, and conflicting ideas strove within her until her brain reeled. Her children's future was vanishing in that smoke, but she was saving their father's life. Was it not her first duty to make him happy? This last thought would bring peace for a little space.

She had the freedom of the laboratory now, and might stay there as long as she pleased, but even this melancholy satisfaction had to be given up. It was too painful to see Balthazar so absorbed in his work that he did not even notice her presence; sometimes, too, she felt that she was actually in the way; the pangs of jealousy became intolerable, every little unintentional neglect was a deadly wound, a wild desire would seize her that the house might be blown up, and so put an end to it all. She made a barometer, therefore, of old Lemulquinier. When she heard him whistle as he came and went, or laid the table for breakfact and dinner, she augured that her husband's experiments had turned out well; that there was some hope of success in the near future; but if Lemulquinier was sad or sulky, she turned sad, wistful eyes on him: was Balthazar also depressed? A sort of tacit understanding was established between them at last, in spite of the proud

reserve of the mistress and the surly independence of the man-servant.

She had no resource in herself, no power of throwing off the thoughts that depressed her; she experienced to the full every crisis of hope or despair; the load of anxiety for the husband and the children that she loved weighed more and more heavily on the trembling wife and mother. She scarcely noticed how dreary the house was, or the silence and gloom that once had chilled her heart as she sat in the parlor all day long; she had grown silent too, and forgot to smile. She brought up her two daughters to be good housewives; with a mother's sad foresight, she tried to teach them various branches of womanly skill against the day when they might come face to face with poverty. But beneath the monotonous surface of existence the pulses of life beat painfully. By the end of the summer Balthazar had not only spent all the money which the old Abbé de Solis had raised by selling the diamonds in Paris, but he was in debt—he owed some twenty thousand francs to Protez and Chiffreville.

In August 1813, about a year after the day of the opening scene of this story, Claes was no nearer the end in view, though he had made several interesting discoveries, for which, unluckily, he cared not at all. The day which saw his programme completely carried out found him overwhelmed with a sense of failure. The thought of the vast sums of money which had been spent, and all to no purpose, drove him to despair. It was a wretched ending to his hopes. He left his garret, came slowly down into the parlor where the children were, sank into one of the low chairs, and sat there for a while like one dead, paying no heed to the questions with which his wife plied him. He escaped upstairs that he might have no witness to his grief. Josephine followed him, and brought him into her room; and there, alone with her, Balthazar gave way to his despair. In the man's tears, in the broken words that bore witness to the artist's discouragement, in the remorse of the father, there was something so wild and incoherent, so dreadful, so touching, that Mme. Claes, watching

him, felt an anguish that she had never known before. The victim comforted the executioner.

When Balthazar said with horrible earnestness, "I am a scoundrel; I am risking our children's lives and yours; I ought to kill myself, it would be a good thing for you all," the words cut her to the heart. She knew her husband so well that she was in terror lest he should act at once on this horrible suggestion; and one of those revulsions of feelings that stir life to its depths swept over her, a revulsion all the more dangerous because Pepita allowed no sign of agitation to appear, and tried to be calm and dispassionate.

"This time I have not consulted Pierquin, dear," she said; "he may be friendly, but he would not be above feeling a secret satisfaction if we were ruined, so I have taken the advice of an old man who has a father's kindness for us. My confessor, the Abbé de Solis, suggested a way of averting ruin at any rate. He came to see your pictures; and he thinks that if we sell those in the gallery we could pay off all the mortgages as well as your debts to Protez and Chiffreville, for I expect there is something owing to them?"

Claes bent his head as a sign of assent; already his hair was grown white.

"M. de Solis knows the Happes and the Dunckers of Amsterdam," she went on; "they have a mania for buying pictures, their money was only made yesterday; and as they know that such works of art are only to be found in old family collections, they will be only too glad to give their full value for the paintings. Even when our estates are clear, there will still be something left over, for the pictures will bring in at least a hundred thousand ducats, and then you can go on with your work. We need very little, the two girls and I; we will be very careful; and in time we will save enough money to fill the empty frames again with other pictures, and in the meantime you shall be happy."

Balthazar raised his face to his wife's; he felt half doubtful, half relieved. They had exchanged rôles. The wife had become the protecting power; and he, in spite of the sympathy

of hearts between them, held Josephine in his arms, and did not feel that she was convulsed with anguish, did not see how the tresses of her hair were shaken by the throbbing of her heart, nor notice the nervous quivering of her lips.

"I have not dared to tell you," he cried, "that I am scarcely separated from the Absolute by a hair's-breadth. I have only to discover a means of submitting metals to intense heat in a vessel where the pressure of the atmosphere is nil—in short, in a perfect vacuum, and I shall volatize them."

Mme. Claes almost broke down, the egoistic answer was too much for her. She had expected passionate gratitude for her devotion, and she received—a problem in chemistry. She left her husband abruptly, went down stairs into the parlor, sank into her low chair again, and burst into tears. Her two daughters, Marguerite and Félicie, each took one of her hands in theirs, and knelt on either side of her, wondering at her grief.

"What is it, mother?" they asked her again and again.

"Poor children! I am dying; I feel that I have not long to live."

Marguerite shuddered as she looked at her mother's face, and for the first time noticed a ghastly pallor beneath the dark olive hue of the skin.

"Martha! Martha!" called Félicie. "Come here, mamma wants you."

The old waiting-woman came running from the kitchen. When she saw the livid color that had replaced the dusky brown-red tints in her mistress' face—

"Body of Christ!" she cried in Spanish, "madame is dying!"

She hurried away to bid Josette heat some water for a foot-bath for her mistress, and then returned.

"Don't frighten the master, Martha; say nothing about it," said Mme. Claes. "Poor dear girls!" she added convulsively, clasping Marguerite and Félicie to her heart. "If I could only live long enough to see you both happy and married.—Martha," she went on, "tell Lemulquinier to go to M. de Solis and ask him to come to see me."

The thunderbolt that struck down the mistress of the house naturally brought dismay in the kitchen. Josette and Martha, old and devoted servants, were so deeply attached to Mme. Claes and her two daughters that the blow was as heavy as it was unexpected. The terrible words: "Madame is dying, monsieur must have killed her! Be quick and get ready a mustard bath!" had drawn sundry ejaculations from Josette, who hurled them at Lemulquinier. Lemulquinier, calm and phlegmatic as ever, was eating his breakfast at a corner of the table, underneath one of the windows which looked out on the yard. The whole kitchen was as spick and span as the daintiest boudoir.

"I knew how it would end," remarked Josette, looking straight at the valet as she spoke. She had climbed on to a stool to reach down a copper kettle which shone like burnished gold. "What mother could look on and see her children's father amusing himself by frittering away a fortune, like the master does, and everything flying away in smoke."

Josette's countenance, framed in its frilled cap, was not unlike the round wooden nut-crackers that Germans carve; she gave Lemulquinier a sharp glance out of her little bloodshot eyes, which was almost venomous. For all answer the old valet gave a shrug worthy of a sorely-tried Mirabeau, and opened his cavernous mouth, but only to put a piece of bread and butter, accompanied by a morsel of red herring, into it.

"If madame would let monsieur have some money," he said at length, "instead of bothering him, we should all be swimming in gold very soon! There is not the thickness of a farthing between us and the——"

"Well, then, you, with your twenty thousand francs of savings, why don't you hand them over to the master? He is your master, and since you put such faith in his sayings and doings——"

"You know nothing about them, Josette. Just mind your pots and pans, and boil the water," said the Fleming, interrupting the cook.

"I know what I know; I know that we once had several thousand ounces of silver plate here, and you have melted it down, you and your master between you; and we shall very soon have only six halfpennies left out of five pence."

"And the master," put in Martha, "will kill madame, and get rid of a wife who holds him back, and will not let him eat everything up. He is possessed, that is quite plain. You are risking your soul at the least, Lemulquinier, if you have one, that is, for you are just like a block of ice, when all the rest of us are in such trouble. The young ladies are crying like Magdalens. Be quick and go for M. de Solis!"

"I have the master's orders to set the laboratory straight," said the valet. "It is too far from here to the Quartier d'Esquerchin. Go yourself."

"Just listen to the brute!" said Martha. "Who is to give madame her foot-bath? Is she to be left to die, with the blood gone to her head?"

"Mulquinier!" said Marguerite from the dining-room, which was next to the kitchen, "when you have left the message for M. de Solis, go and ask Dr. Pierquin to come at once."

"Hein! you will have to go!" said Josette.

"Mademoiselle, monsieur told me to clear out the laboratory," answered Lemulquinier, turning triumphantly to the two women-servants.

M. Claes came down the stairs at this moment, and Marguerite spoke to him. "Father, can you spare us Mulquinier to go on an errand into the town?"

"There, you miserable old heathen, you will have to go now!" said Martha, as she heard M. Claes answer in the affirmative.

The lack of goodwill and devotion to the family on the valet's part was a sore point; the two women and Lemulquinier were always bickering, and his indifference increased their loyal affection. This apparently paltry quarrel was to bring about great results in future days when the family stood in need of help in misfortune.

Once more Balthazar became so absorbed that he did not notice how ill his wife was. He gave little Jean a ride on his knee, but his thoughts were all the while with the problem which he might hope once more to solve. He saw the water brought for his wife's foot-bath, for she had not strength to leave the parlor, or the low chair into which she had sunk. He watched the two girls as they busied themselves about their mother, and did not try to account for their anxiety and care of her. Mme. Claes laid her fingers on her lips if Marguerite or Jean seemed about to speak. A scene of this nature was certain to make a young girl think; and Marguerite, standing between her father and mother, was old enough and sensible enough to understand what it meant.

A time always comes in the history of every family when the children begin consciously or unconsciously to judge their parents. Mme. Claes felt that this critical time had come; that the girl of sixteen, with her strong sense of justice, would see what would appear to her to be her father's faults very plainly, and Mme. Claes set herself to justify his conduct. The profound respect which she showed for him at this moment, the way in which she effaced herself for fear of disturbing his meditations, left a deep impression on her children's minds; they looked on their father with something like awe. But in spite of the infectious nature of this devotion, Marguerite could not help recognizing it, and her admiration increased for the mother to whom she was bound so closely by every incident of daily life. The young girl's affection had deepened ever since she had dimly divined her mother's troubles and had pondered over them; no human power could have kept the knowledge of them from Marguerite; a word heedlessly let fall by Josette or Martha had enlightened her as to their cause. In spite of Mme. Claes' reserve, her daughter had unraveled thread by thread the mystery of this household tragedy.

In time to come Marguerite would be her mother's active helper and confidante, and, perhaps, in the end a formidable judge. Mme. Claes watched Marguerite anxiously, and tried

to fill her heart with her own devotion; she saw the young girl's firmness and sound judgment, and shuddered to think of possible strife between father and daughter when she should be no more, and Marguerite had taken her place. Poor woman! she dreaded the consequences of her death far more than death itself. The resolution she had just taken had been prompted by forethought for Balthazar. By freeing her husband's estate from all liabilities, she left it independent, and forestalled all future disputes by separating his interests from those of her children; she hoped to see him happy until her eyes were closed, and when that day came, Marguerite would be the guardian angel who watched over the family. She hoped to leave her tenderness in Marguerite's heart, and so, from beyond the grave, her love should still shine upon those so dear to her. Yet she shrank from lowering Claes in Marguerite's eyes, and would not impart her misgivings and fears until the inevitable moment came; she watched Marguerite more closely than ever, wondering whether of her own accord the young girl would be a mother to her brothers and sisters, and a gentle and tender helpmeet to her father.

So Mme. Claes' last days were embittered by fears and sad forebodings of which she could speak to no one. She felt that her deathblow had been dealt her in that last fatal scene, and her thoughts turned to the future; while Balthazar, now totally unfitted for the cares of property and the interests of domestic life, thought of nothing but the Absolute. The deep silence in the parlor was only broken by the monotonous beating of Balthazar's foot; he did not notice that little Jean had wearied of his ride, and climbed down from his father's knee. Marguerite, sitting beside her mother, looked at her white, sorrowful face, and then glanced from time to time at her father, and wondered why he showed no feeling. Presently the street door shut to with a clang that echoed through the house, and the family saw the old Abbe de Solis slowly crossing the court on his nephew's arm.

"Oh! here is M. Emmanuel," cried Félicie.

"Good boy!" murmured Mme. Claes, as she saw Emmanuel de Solis; "I am glad to see him again."

Marguerite's face flushed at her mother's praise. Only two days ago the sight of the Abbé's nephew had stirred mysterious feelings in her heart, and awakened thoughts that had hitherto lain dormant. Only two days ago her mother's confessor had come to see the pictures in the gallery, and one of those small events that pass unheeded, and alter the whole course of a life, had then taken place; for this reason a brief sketch of the two visitors must be given here.

Mme. Claes made it a rule of conduct to perform the duties of her religion in private. Her director, who now entered the house for the second time, was scarcely known by sight to its inmates; but it was impossible to see the uncle and nephew together without feeling touched and reverent, and their visit had left the same impression on every one.

The Abbé de Solis was an old man of eighty, with silver hair; all the ebbing life in the feeble, wasted face seemed to linger in the eyes. He walked with difficulty, for one of his shrunken legs terminated in a painfully deformed foot encased in a velvet wrapping, so that he always needed the support of a crutch or of his nephew's arm. Yet when you saw the bent figure and emaciated frame, you felt that an iron will sustained that fragile and suffering body, and that a pure and religious soul dwelt within it. The Spanish priest, distinguished for his vast learning, his knowledge of the world, and his sincere piety, had been successively a Dominican friar, cardinal-penitentiary of Toledo, and vicar-general of the archbishopric of Mechlin. The influence of the house of Casa-Real would have made him one of the highest dignitaries of the Church; but even if the French Revolution had not put an end to his ecclesiastical career, grief for the death of the young Duke, whose governor he had been, had led him to retire from active life, and to devote himself entirely to the education of a nephew, who had been left an orphan at a very early age.

After the French conquest of the Netherlands he had

settled in Douai to be near Mme. Claes. In his youth he had felt an enthusiastic reverence for Saint Theresa, and had always decided leanings towards the more mystical side of Christianity. There have always been Illuminists and Quietists in Flanders; Mlle. Bourignon made most of her converts among the Flemings; and the old Abbé de Solis found a little flock of Catholics in Douai, who still clung, undeterred by papal censure, to the doctrines of Fénelon and Mme. Guyon, and was the more glad to stay among them because they looked on him as a father in the faith. His morals were austere, his life had been exemplary; it was said that he had the gift of trance, and had seen visions. But the stern ascetic was not utterly divorced from the things of this life; his affection for his nephew was a link that bound him to the world, and he was thrifty for Emmanuel's sake. He laid his flock under contribution for a work of charity before having recourse to his own purse; and he was so widely known and respected for his disinterestedness, his perspicacity was so seldom at fault, that every one was ready to answer his appeals. To give some idea of the contrast between uncle and nephew, the older man might be compared to a hollow willow by the water side, and the younger to a briar-rose climbing about the old lichen-covered tree, and covering it with graceful garlands, which seem to support it.

Emmanuel had been rigidly brought up. His uncle hardly allowed him to go out of his sight; no damsel was ever more jealously guarded by her mother; and Emmanuel was almost morbidly conscientious and innocently romantic. Souls that draw all their force from religion retain the bloom of youth that is rubbed off so soon, and the old priest had checked the development of pleasure-loving instincts in his pupil; constant study and an almost monastic discipline had been his preparation for the battle of life. Such a bringing up, which launched Emmanuel into the world with all his youthful freshness of heart, might make his happiness if his affections were rightly placed at the outset, and had endowed him with an angelic purity which invested him with some-

thing of the charm of a young girl. The gentle eyes veiled a brave and fearless soul; there was a light in them that thrilled other souls, as the sound given out by crystal vibrates on the ear. His face was eloquent, yet his features were regular; no one could fail to be struck by their flawless delicacy of outline, and by the expression of repose which comes from inward peace. His fair complexion seemed still more brilliant by force of contrast with his dark eyes and hair. Everything about him was in harmony; his voice did not disappoint the expectations raised by so beautiful a face, and his almost feminine grace of movement and clear, soft gaze were in keeping with his voice. He did not seem to be aware that his half-melancholy reserve, his self-repression, his respectful and tender solicitude for his uncle, excited interest in him; but no one who had seen the two together—the younger man carefully adapting himself to the old Abbé's tottering gait, heedfully looking ahead for the smoothest path, and avoiding any obstacle over which the elder might stumble, could fail to recognize in Emmanuel those generous qualities of heart and brain that make man so noble a creature.

Emmanuel's real greatness showed itself in his love for his uncle, who could do no wrong in his eyes, to whom he rendered an unquestioning obedience; some prophetic instinct, surely, had suggested the gracious name given to him at the font. If in private or abroad the old Abbé exerted the stern and arbitrary authority of a Dominican father, Emmanuel would sometimes raise his head in such noble protest,—with a gesture which seemed to say that if another man had ventured to oppose him, he would have shown his spirit,—that gentle natures were touched by it, as painters are moved by the sight of a great work of art; for a beautiful thought has the same power to stir our souls, whether it is revealed in a living human form, or made real for us by the power of art.

Emmanuel had come with his uncle to see the pictures in the Maison Claes; and Marguerite, having learned from Martha that the Abbé de Solis was in the picture-gallery, found some light pretext for speaking to her mother, so that

she might see the great man of whom she had heard so much. She had gone thither unthinkingly, hiding her little stratagem under the careless manner by which young girls so effectually conceal their real thoughts, and by the side of the old man dressed in black, with his deathly pallor and bent and stooping frame, she had seen Emmanuel's young and beautiful face. The two young creatures had gazed at each other with the same childlike wonder in their eyes; Emmanuel and Marguerite must surely have met each other before in their dreams. Their eyes fell at once, and met again with the same unconscious avowal.

Marguerite took her mother's arm and spoke to her in a low voice to keep up the pretence of her errand; and from under shelter of her mother's wing, as it were, she turned, with a swan-like movement of her throat, to glance once more at Emmanuel, who still stood with his uncle on his arm.

The windows of the gallery had been distributed so that all the light should fall on the pictures, and the dimness of the shadows favored the stolen glances which are the delight of timid souls. Neither of them had, of course, advanced even in thought as far as the *if* with which passion begins; but both of them felt that their hearts were stirred with a vague trouble which youth keeps to itself, shrinking perhaps from disclosing the secret, or wishing to linger over its sweetness. The first impression which calls forth the long dormant emotion of youth is nearly always followed by a mute wonder such as children feel when, for the first time, they hear music. Some children laught at first, and then grow thoughtful; others listen gravely for awhile, and then begin to laugh; but there are souls who are destined to live for poetry or love, and they listen long, with a mute request to hear the music again; their eyes are lighted up with pleasure, or with a dawning sense of wonder at the Infinite. If we are always bound with all the force of early association to the spot where we first understood the beauty and mystery of sound; if we remember the musician and even the instrument with delight, how can we help loving the other soul that for the first time



She turned, with a swan-like movement of her throat, to glance once more at Emmanuel



reveals the music of life to us? Does not the heart from which we draw our first breath of love become, as it were, our native country? Emmanuel and Marguerite were each for each that musical voice which awakens a sleeping sense; it was as if a hand had withdrawn the veil of cloud and pointed out to them the distant shore bathed in a noonday blaze of light.

When Mme. Claes made the Abbé pause for a moment before a picture of an angel by Guido, Marguerite leant forward a little to see what Emmanuel thought of it, and Emmanuel glanced at Marguerite, comparing the mute thought shadowed forth on the painter's canvas with the thought revealed in the girl who stood there in life before him. She felt and understood the unconscious and delicious flattery. The old Abbé gravely praised the beautiful composition, and Mme. Claes replied; the young people were silent.

The mysterious dusk of the gallery, the quiet that brooded over the house, the presence of their elders, all the circumstances of their meeting, served to stamp it on the memory, and to deepen the vague outlines of a shadowy dream. All the confused thoughts that fell like rain in Marguerite's soul seemed to have spread themselves out like a wide, clear sea, which was lighted up by a ray of light when Emmanuel stammered out a few words as he took leave of Mme. Claes. The young, rich voice exerted a mysterious spell over her heart; the revelation was complete; it only rested with Emmanuel whether it should bear fruit for him; for the man who first awakens love in a girl's heart is often an unconscious instrument of fate, and leaves his work unfinished. Marguerite bowed in confusion; her good-bye was a glance that seemed to express her regret at losing this pure and charming vision. Like the child, she wanted to hear her music once again.

The leave-taking took place at the foot of the old staircase, before the parlor door, and from the parlor window she watched the uncle and nephew cross the court, and followed them with her eyes until the street door closed on them.

Mme. Claes had been so deeply engrossed with the weighty matters which her director had come to discuss, that she had not thought of watching her daughter's face; and on the occasion of this second visit she was again full of such terrible trouble, that she did not see in the red flush on Marguerite's face the indications of happiness and the workings of a girlish heart.

By the time the old Abbé was announced Marguerite had taken up her work again, and apparently found it so interesting that she greeted the uncle and nephew without raising her eyes from it. M. Claes returned the Abbé de Solis' bow mechanically, and left the parlor as if his presence were demanded elsewhere. The venerable Dominican seated himself beside Mme. Claes with one of those keen glances by which he seemed to read the depths of souls; he had scarcely seen M. Claes and his wife before he guessed that some catastrophe had taken place.

"Go into the garden, children," said the mother. "Marguerite, take Emmanuel to see your father's tulips."

Marguerite, somewhat embarrassed, took Félicie's hand in hers and looked towards the visitor, who reddened and followed her out of the parlor, catching up little Jean to keep himself in countenance. When all four of them were out in the garden, Jean and Félicie scampered off, and Marguerite, left alone with young M. de Solis, went towards the bed of tulips, which Lemulquinier always planted out in the same way, year after year.

"Are you fond of tulips?" Marguerite asked, as Emmanuel seemed unwilling to break the silence.

"They are magnificent, mademoiselle; but a love of tulips is an acquired taste. The flowers dazzle me; I expect that it is because I am so used to working in my dark little room beside my uncle; I like softer colors better."

He looked at Marguerite as he uttered the last words; but in that glance, full of confused longings, there was no suggestion that the quiet face before him, with its white velvet surface and soft color, was like a flower.

"Do you work very hard?" Marguerite asked Emmanuel as they went towards a green-painted garden seat. "You will not be so close to the tulips here," she added; "they will not be so tiring to your eyes. You are right, the colors are dazzling; they make one's eyes ache."

"Yes, I work hard," the young man answered after a short pause, spent in smoothing the gravel on the path with his foot. "I work at all sorts of things. . . . My uncle meant to make a priest of me——"

"Oh!" Marguerite exclaimed naïvely.

"I objected; I felt that I had no vocation. But it took a great deal of courage to cross my uncle's wishes. He is so kind and so very fond of me. Quite lately he paid for a substitute to save me from the conscription, and I am only a poor orphan nephew——"

"Then what do you mean to do?" asked Marguerite, with a sudden gesture, which seemed as if she would fain take the words back again, for she added:

"Pardon me, monsieur; you must think me very inquisitive."

"Oh! mademoiselle, nobody but my uncle has ever asked me the question," said Emmanuel, looking at her admiringly and gratefully. "I am to be a schoolmaster. There is no help for it; I am not rich, you see. If I can obtain a head-mastership in some school in Flanders, I shall have enough to live upon. I shall marry some woman who will be content with very little, and whom I shall love. That is the sort of life that is in prospect for me. Perhaps that is why I would rather have a moon-daisy from the fields about Orchies, a flower that no one looks at, than these glowing tulips, all purple and golden and emerald and sapphire. The tulips seem to me a sort of symbol of a brilliant and luxurious life, just as the moon-daisy is like a quiet, old-fashioned life, a poor schoolmaster's life such as mine will be."

"Until now, I have always called the moon-daisies marguerites," said she.

Emmanuel de Solis flushed up to the eyes; he racked his

brains for an answer, and tormented the gravel with his boots. So many things occurred to him, and were rejected as silly, that the pause grew embarrassing, and he was forced to say something. "I did not venture to pronounce your name . . . " he said at last, and got no further.

"A schoolmaster!" she went on.

"Oh! I shall be a schoolmaster for the sake of a secure position, mademoiselle, but I want to do other things as well, something great that wants doing. . . . I should like some bit of historical research best."

"Oh!"

That "Oh," which seemed to cover the speaker's private reflections, added to the young man's embarrassment. He began to laugh foolishly, and said:

"You are making me talk about my own affairs, mademoiselle, when I should speak to you of yourself."

"I think my mother and your uncle must have finished their talk," she said, looking at the parlor windows.

"Your mother looked very much altered, I thought,"

"She is in trouble, and says nothing to us about her troubles, and we can only feel sorry for her, that is all we can do."

As a matter of fact, Mme. Claes had just consulted the Abbé de Solis on a difficult case of conscience, which he alone could resolve. Ruin was clearly impending; and now that the pictures were about to be sold, she thought of keeping back a large part of the purchase money, a sort of reserve fund to secure her children against want. Balthazar took so little heed of his affairs that it would be easy to do this without his knowledge. After mature deliberation, and after taking all the facts of the case into consideration, the old Dominican had given his sanction to this prudent course. The conduct of the sale devolved on him, and the whole matter was arranged privately for fear of injuring M. Claes' credit.

The old Abbé sent his nephew to Amsterdam duly armed with letters of introduction; and the young man, delighted to have this opportunity of doing a service to the house of Claes,

succeeded in selling the collection in the picture gallery to the celebrated bankers, Happe and Duncker, ostensibly for the sum of eighty thousand Dutch ducats, but fifteen thousand ducats were to be paid secretly over and above this amount to Mme. Claes. The pictures were so well known that a single letter from Balthazar accepting the proposals made by Messieurs Happe and Duncker completed the bargain. Emmanuel de Solis was commissioned to receive the price of the pictures, which he remitted by other than the ordinary channels, so that Douai might know nothing of the transaction which had just taken place.

By the end of September, Balthazar had paid his debts, cleared his liabilities, and was at work once more; but the glory of the Maison Claes had departed. Yet Balthazar was so blinded by his passion that he seemed to feel no regrets; he was so confident that he could retrieve all his losses in a little while, that he had reserved the right to repurchase his pictures. And as for Josephine, in her eyes the paintings were as nothing compared with the happiness of her husband and children; she filled the blank spaces in the gallery with pictures from the state apartments, and rearranged the furniture in the rooms where the family sat, so that the empty spaces on the walls should not be noticed.

Balthazar had about two hundred thousand francs with which to begin his experiments afresh, his debts were all paid, and M. de Solis and his nephew became trustees for Mme. Claes' reserve fund, which was swelled somewhat further, for gold was at a premium in those days of European wars, and the Abbe de Solis sold the ducats, receiving for them sixty-six thousand francs in crowns, which were stored away in the Abbé's cellar.

For eight months Mme. Claes had the sad satisfaction of seeing her husband entirely engrossed in his work; but she never recovered from the shock received that August afternoon, and fell into a decline, from which there was no recovery. Science had Balthazar in its clutches; the disasters that befell the armies of France, the first fall of Napoleon,

the return of the exiled Bourbons, all the events of those eventful years could not draw his attention from his studies; he was no longer a citizen, as he had ceased to be a husband and a father. He was a chemist.

Towards the end of the year 1814 the wasting disease that had attacked Mme. Claes had made such progress that she could not leave her bed. She would not drag out this slow death in her own room where she had lived in her happier days, it was too full of memories, and she could not help drawing comparisons between the present and the past, which overwhelmed her with despair, so she lay downstairs in the parlor. The doctors had humored the desire of her heart, pronouncing the room to be more airy, cheerful, and convenient than her own apartment; her bed had been placed between the chimney-piece and the window, so that she could look out into the garden. The last days of her life were spent in perfecting her work on earth, in implanting in her daughters' hearts the passionate devotion of her own. She could no longer show her love for her husband, but she was free to lavish her affection on her daughters, and the charm of this life of close communion between mother and daughters was all the sweeter because it had begun so late.

The little scruples of a too sensitive affection weighed upon her, as upon all generous natures, like remorse. Her children had not always known, she thought, the love which was their due, and she tried to atone for all these imaginary wrongs; they felt her exquisite tenderness in her constant thought and care for them. She would fain have sheltered them in her heart, and nestled them beneath her failing wings, given them in one day the love that they should have had in those days when she had neglected them. Her soul was full of remorse, which gave a fervent warmth to her words and caresses; her eyes dwelt fondly on her children before the kind tones of her voice thrilled their hearts; her hand seemed always to be stretched out in benediction.

The hospitality of the Maison Claes had come to an end after the first splendid effort; Balthazar never gave another

ball on the anniversary of his marriage, and saw no visitors; the house was quieter than ever, but this occasioned no surprise in Douai, for Mme. Claes' illness was a sufficient reason in itself for the change. The debts had been paid, and this had put a stop to gossip, and during the foreign occupation of Flanders and the war of the Hundred Days the chemist was completely forgotten. For two years Douai was almost in a state of siege, occupied in turn by French troops or foreign soldiers; it became a city of refuge for all nationalities and for peasants obliged to fly from the open country; people lived in fear for their property, and even in terror of their lives; and in such a time of calamity and anxiety no one had a thought to spare for others. The Abbé de Solis and his nephew, and the two Pierquins, were Mme. Claes' only visitors.

The winter of 1814-1815 was a long and most painful agony for her. Her husband seldom came to see her. He sat with her after dinner, it is true, for a few hours; but she had not sufficient strength now to keep up a long conversation; and when he had repeated two or three remarks, which he never varied, he sat beside her without speaking, and the dismal silence in the parlor was unbroken. The only breaks in this dreary monotony were the evenings when the Abbé de Solis and his nephew came to the Maison Claes. The old Abbé played backgammon with Balthazar; while Marguerite, seated at her mother's bedside, talked with Emmanuel. Mme. Claes smiled on their innocent happiness, and would not let them see how sweet and how painful it was to her aching heart to feel the fresh breath of the dawn of love in the words that they let fall. The tones of the two young voices, so full of charm for the lovers, almost broke her heart; she surprised a glance of comprehension exchanged between them, and memories of her youth and the happy past brought her thoughts to the present, and she felt all its bitterness to the full as she lay there like one already dead. Emmanuel and Marguerite instinctively divined her sufferings, and delicacy of feeling led them to check the sweet playfulness of love lest it should add to her pain.

No one as yet seems to have discovered that our sentiments have a life of their own, and take their character from the circumstances which gave them birth; the places in which they gathered strength, the thoughts that filled our minds at the time, influence their development and leave their impress upon them. There is a love like that of Mme. Claes, passionate in its beginnings and passionate to the end; there is a love, on which everything smiles from the outset, that never loses the glad freshness of its morning, and reaps its harvest of happiness amid laughter and rejoicing; but there is also a love early enveloped in sadness or surrounded by misfortune, its pleasures are painful and dearly bought, snatched amid fears, embittered by remorse, or clogged with despair. This love in the depths of their hearts, which neither Marguerite nor Emmanuel recognized as yet, this feeling that had been awakened in a moment of stillness and silence beneath the dusky roof of the picture gallery, in the presence of the austere old Abbé, was tinged with something of the sober twilight hues of its earliest surroundings; it was grave and reticent, but full of subtle shades of sweetness, and furtive joys over which they lingered in secret as over stolen grapes snatched in some vineyard nook.

Beside this bed of pain they never dared to give expression to their thoughts, and all unconsciously their emotion gathered strength because it was repressed in the depths of their hearts, and only revealed itself in their care for the invalid. It seemed to Emmanuel that this drew them more closely together, and that he was already a son to Marguerite's mother; though instead of the sweet language of lovers he received only sad grateful thanks from Marguerite. Their sighs of happiness as they exchanged glances were scarcely distinguishable from the sighs drawn from them by the sight of the mother's suffering; their brief moments of felicity, implied confessions, and unspoken promises, moments when their hearts went out towards each other, stood out, like the Allegories painted by Raphael, against a dark background. Each felt a trust and confidence in the other, though no words had

been said; they felt that the sun still shone, though heavy dark clouds had gathered overhead, and they knew not what wind could scatter them; the future seemed doubtful, perhaps trouble would dog them all their lives, so they sat timidly among the gloomy shadows without daring to ask, "Shall we finish the day together?"

Yet, beneath the tenderness that Mme. Claes showed for her children, there lay concealed other thoughts to which she nobly refused to listen. Her children never caused her apprehensions and terror; they were her comfort, but they were not her life; she lived for them, but she was dying for Balthazar. Painful though it might be for her to have her husband by her side, absent in thought for whole hours, to receive an unseeing glance from time to time, yet she was unconscious of her sufferings so long as he was with her. Balthazar's indifference to his dying wife would have seemed unpardonable to any stranger who chanced to witness it, but Mme. Claes and her daughters were so used to it, and understood him so well, that they forgave him.

If Mme. Claes had some dangerous seizure in the course of the day, if she felt worse or seemed to be at the point of death, Claes was the one person in the house, or indeed in the whole town, who did not know that the wife who had once been so passionately loved was in danger. Lemulquinier knew it, but Félicie and Marguerite had been forbidden by their mother to speak to Claes of her illness.

Mme. Claes was happy when she heard his footsteps in the picture gallery as he crossed it on his way to dinner; she was about to see him, she summoned all her strength to meet the coming joy. The color rushed to the pale face of the dying woman as he entered, she almost looked as she had been wont to do in health; the man of science came to her bedside and took her hand in his, and never saw her as she really was: for him alone she was always well. In reply to his, "How are you to-day, dear wife?" she would answer, "Better, dear!" and he in his preoccupied mood readily believed her when she spoke of getting up again, of being quite

well to-morrow. He was so abstracted that he never saw that there was anything seriously wrong with his wife, and thought the disease of which she was dying was some passing ailment. Every one else knew that she was dying, but for him she was full of life.

This year saw the husband and wife completely severed. Claes slept in a distant room, lived in his laboratory or study from morning till night, and never saw Pepita save in the presence of his daughters and the few friends of the house who came to visit her. He had learned to do without her. The two who had once shared every thought drifted further and further apart; the moments of close communion, of rapture, of expansion, which are the life of the heart, came seldom and more seldom, and the rare moments of bliss ceased altogether. If physical suffering had not come to her aid and filled up the empty days, the anguish of her isolation might have killed Josephine, but she was dying. She was sometimes in such terrible pain that she was glad that he, whom she never ceased to love, was not there to be a witness of her sufferings. And for the part of the evening that Balthazar spent with her, she lay watching him, feeling that he was happy after his fashion, and this happiness which she had procured for him she made her own. This meagre satisfaction must suffice for her now; she no longer asked if she was beloved; she strove to believe it, and went softly, fearing that this thin sheet of ice should give way and her heart and all her hopes should be drowned in the dark depths that yawned beneath.

Nothing ever happened to break the monotony of the days; the disease that wasted Mme. Claes' strength perhaps contributed to the apparent peace, for her affection could only play a passive part, and weakness made it easier to wait and endure patiently. The year 1816 opened under these gloomy conditions.

In the last days of February came the sudden shock which brought the angelic woman, who, so the Abbé de Solis said, was almost sinless, to the grave. The blow came from Pierquin.

He watched for an opportunity when the two girls were sufficiently far away to whisper in her ear, "Madame, M. Claes has commissioned me to borrow three hundred thousand francs on his estates; you must take measures to secure your children's property."

Mme. Claes clasped her hands and raised her eyes. She thanked the notary by a kindly inclination of the head and by a sad smile, which touched Pierquin. The words were like the stab of a knife; they killed Pepita. The rest of the day she spent with the painful thoughts that swelled her heart; she felt like some traveler who has walked steadily and bravely along the dizzy brink of a precipice, till some pebble slips from under his feet, and, losing his balance, he at last falls headlong into the depths. As soon as the notary left the house, Mme. Claes asked Marguerite for writing materials, and summoned all her strength to write her final directions and requests. Many times she stopped anl looked up at Marguerite; the time for making her confidence had come.

Marguerite had taken her mother's place as head of the household during this illness, and had more than realized the dying woman's hopes of her. Mme. Claes feared no longer for the family she was leaving under the care of this strong and loving guardian angel; she should still live on in Marguerite. Both the women doubtless felt that there were sad secrets to be told; whenever the mother glanced at Marguerite, the girl looked up at once, and the eyes of both were full of tears. Several times, as Mme. Claes laid down the pen, Marguerite had begun, "Mother? . . ." and had broken off because her voice failed her; and her mother, absorbed in her last thoughts, did not hear her entreaty. At last the letter was finished; and Marguerite, who had held the taper while it was sealed, turned away to avoid seeing the direction.

"You can read it, my child!" the dying woman said, with a heart-rending tone in her voice.

Marguerite watched her mother's fingers as she wrote, *For my daughter Marguerite.*

"I will rest now," she added, putting the letter under her pillow, "and then we will talk."

She fell back on her pillows as if exhausted by the effort she had just made, and slept for several hours. When she awoke, all her children were kneeling around her in fervent prayer. It was a Thursday; Gabriel and Jean had just come home from school; Emmanuel de Solis—who for the past six months had been one of the masters there, teaching history and philosophy—had come with them.

"Dear children, we must bid each other farewell," she cried. "You are all with me to the last, and *he* . . ." She did not finish the sentence.

"M. Emmanuel," said Marguerite, who saw the deathly pallor of her mother's face, "will you tell our father that mamma is much worse?"

Young de Solis went up to the laboratory, and through Lemulquinier's good offices saw Balthazar for a moment; the chemist heard the young man's urgent entreaties, and answered, "I am coming."

"My friend," Mme. Claes said when Emmanuel returned from this errand, "will you take my two boys away, and ask your uncle to come to me? I must take the last sacraments, I think, and I should like to receive them from his hand."

When she was left once more with the two girls she made a sign which Marguerite understood. Félicie was sent away, and the mother and daughter were alone.

"I had something to say to you, mamma dear," said Marguerite, who did not realize how ill her mother was, and knew nothing of the shock which Pierquin's ill-advised revelation had given her. "I have been without money for housekeeping expenses these ten days past, and the servants' wages have not been paid for six months. I have twice made up my mind to ask papa for the money, and both times my courage failed. You do not know what has happened. All the wine in the cellar and the pictures in the gallery have been sold——"

"He has not said a word about it to me!" cried Mme.

Claes. "God is taking me to Himself in time, but, oh! my poor children, what will become of you?"

She spent a few moments in fervent prayer; remorse seemed to glow in her eyes.

"Marguerite," she went on, drawing the sealed envelope from its hiding-place, "if, when I am dead, you should ever be brought to misery, that is to say, if you should want bread, then open this letter and read it. Marguerite dear, love your father, but take care of your sister and brothers. In a few days, perhaps in a few hours, you will be the head of the house! Be very careful; and, Marguerite, it may very likely happen that you will have to oppose your father's wishes; for he has spent large sums already on this effort to learn a secret which, if discovered, will make him famous and bring him enormous wealth, and he is sure to want money again: perhaps he will ask you for money; and then, while you must remember that you are the sole guardian of those whose interests are committed to your care, you must never forget what is due to your father, to a great man who is spending himself, his wealth, and his whole life in a task which will make his family illustrious, and you must give him all a daughter's tenderness. He would never wrong his children intentionally; he has such a noble heart; he is so good, so full of love for you; you, who are left, will see him a kind and affectionate father once more. These things must be said, Marguerite, now that I am on the brink of the grave. Promise me, my child, that you will fill my place, if you would make it easier for me to die; promise that you will never add to your father's troubles by a single reproach, that you will never judge him harshly! In short, you must be a gentle and indulgent mediator until your task is finished, until your father once more takes his place as head of the family."

"I understand, dearest mother," said Marguerite, as she kissed the dying woman's red eyelids. "I will do as you wish."

"And you must not marry, darling, until Gabriel is old enough to take your place," Mme. Claes went on. "If you

were married, your husband very likely would not share your feelings; he might make trouble in the family, and harass your father."

Marguerite looked into her mother's eyes and said, "Have you no other counsels to give me with regard to my marriage?"

"Do you hesitate, dear child?" asked the dying mother in alarm.

"No," she answered; "I promise to obey you."

"Poor child!" said her mother, as she shed hot tears, "I could not bring myself to sacrifice myself for you, and now I am asking you to sacrifice yourself for them all. Happiness makes us selfish. Yes, Marguerite, I was weak, because I was happy. You must be strong; you must think for the rest, and so act that your brothers and your sister shall never reproach me. Love your father, and do not thwart him . . . more than you can help."

Her head fell back on the pillow, her strength had failed her, she could not say another word. The struggle between the wife and the mother had exhausted her. A few moments later the Abbé de Solis and his assistants entered the parlor, and the servants crowded in. The Abbé's presence recalled Mme. Claes to herself, and as the rite began she looked about her, seeking Balthazar among the faces about her bed.

"Where is the master?" she asked in a piteous tone, which sent a thrill of horror through those assembled; her whole life and death seemed to be summed up in that cry. Martha hurried from the room, and, old as she was, ran up to the laboratory, and knocked loudly at the door.

"Monsieur," she cried, in angry indignation, "madame is dying! They are going to administer the sacrament, and are waiting for you."

"I am coming down directly," said Balthazar.

Lemulquinier appeared a moment later, and said that his master was about to follow. Mme. Claes never took her eyes from the door all through the ceremony, but it was over before Balthazar came. The Abbé de Solis and the children

were standing beside the bed, a flush came over the dying woman's face at the sight of her husband, the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Were you on the point of decomposing nitrogen?" she asked with angelic sweetness, that sent a thrill through those about her.

"I have done it!" he cried triumphantly. "Nitrogen is partly composed of oxygen, partly of some imponderable substance which to all appearance is the essential principle of——"

He suddenly stopped, interrupted by a murmur of horror, which brought him to his senses.

"What was it that they told me?" he began. "Are you really worse? . . . What has happened?"

"This," said the Abbé de Solis indignantly in Balthazar's ear, "this—your wife is dying, and you have killed her!" and without waiting for an answer, the Abbé took Emmanuel's arm and left the room, the children went with him across the courtyard. Balthazar stood for awhile as if thunderstruck; he gazed at his wife with tears in his eyes.

"You are dying, and I have killed you?" he cried. "What does he mean?"

"Dear," she answered, "your love was my life, and when all unconsciously you ceased to love me, my life ceased too."

The children had come back again; Claes sent them away, and sat down by his wife's pillow. "Have I ever ceased to love you for one single moment?" he asked, taking her hand, and pressing it to his lips.

"I have no reproaches to make, dearest. You have made me very happy, too happy indeed; for the contrast between the early days of our marriage, which were so full of joy, and these last years, when you have no longer been yourself, and the days have been so empty, has been more than I could bear. Our inner life, like our physical life, has its vital springs. For the past six years you have been dead to love, to your family, to all that makes the happiness of life. I am not thinking of the joy and bliss which are the appanage of

youth, and must cease with youth, but which leaves behind them the fruits on which the soul lives afterwards, an unbounded confidence and sweet established uses; you have deprived me of all these solaces of the after time. Ah! well, it is time for me to go; this is not a life together in any sense; you have hidden your thoughts and your actions from me. How can you have come to feel afraid of me? Have I ever reproached you by gesture, or word, or deed? Well, and you have sold your remaining pictures, you have even sold the wine in the cellar, and you have begun to borrow money again on your property, without a word of all this to me! Oh, I am about to take leave of life, and I am sick of life! If you make mistakes, if in striving after the impossible you lose sight of everything else, have I not shown that there was enough love in my heart to find it sweet to share your errors, to be always by your side, even, if need be, in the paths of crime? You have loved me only too well, therein lies my glory and my misery. This illness began long ago, Balthazar; it dates from the day when you first made it clear to me, here in this room where I am about to die, that the claims of science were stronger than family ties. And now your wife is dead, and you have run through your fortune. Your fortune and your wife were your own to dispose of; but when I shall be no more, all my property will pass to your children, and you will not be able to touch it. What will become of you? I must tell you the truth, and dying eyes see far. Now that I am gone, what will counterbalance this accursed passion, which is as strong in you as life itself? If I have been sacrificed to it, your children will count for very little; for, in justice to you, I must allow that I came first with you. Two millions and six years of toil have been thrown into that bottomless pit, and you have discovered nothing——"

Claes' white head sank; he hid his face with his hand.

"You will discover nothing but shame for yourself and misery for your children," continued the dying woman. "Already they call you 'Claes the Alchemist;' a little later, and it will be 'Claes the Madman!' As for me, I believe in you;

I know how great and learnėd you are; I know that you have genius, but ordinary minds draw no distinction between genius and madness. Glory is the sun of the dead; yours will be the fate of all grėatness here on earth; you will know no happiness as long as you live. I am going now; I have had no joy of your fame, which would have consoled me for my lost happiness; and so, to sweeten the bitterness of death, let me feel certain that my children's bread is secure, my dear Balthazar. Nothing can give me peace of mind, not even your——"

"I swear," said Claes, "to——"

"No, dear, do not swear, lest you should fail to keep your word," she said, interrupting him. "It was your duty to protect us, and for nearly seven years you have failed to do so. Science is your life. Great men should have neither wife nor children; they should tread the paths of misery alone; their virtues are not those of commonplace people, such men as you belong to the whole world, not to one woman and a single family. You are like those great trees which exhaust the soil round about them, and I am the poor field-plant beside it that can never rear its head so high; I must die before half your life is spent. I have waited till my last hour to tell you these horrible truths, which have been revealed to me in anguish and despair. Have pity on our children! Again and again, until my last sigh, I entreat you to have pity on our children, that so my words may find an echo in your heart. This wife of yours is dead, you see. Slowly and gradually she has starved for lack of affection and happiness. Alas! but for the cruel kindness which you have involuntarily shown me, could I have lived so long? But the poor children! They have never failed me; they have grown with the growth of my sorrows, and the mother has outlived the wife. Have pity, have pity on our children!"

"Lemulquinier!" Balthazar thundered.

The old servant hurried into the room.

"Go up and break everything to pieces, all the machinery, and everything else. Be careful how you do it, but do it

thoroughly! . . . I will have nothing more to do with science!" he said, turning to his wife.

"It is too late," she said with a glance at Lemulquinier.—"Marguerite!" she moaned, feeling that death was near. Marguerite stood in the doorway, and gave a sharp cry as she met her mother's eyes and saw the ghastly pallor of her face.

"Marguerite!" the dying woman cried again. This last word she ever spoke, uttered with a wild vehemence, seemed like a solemn summons to her daughter to take her place.

The rest of the family hurried in alarm to the bedside, in time to see her die. Mme. Claes' life had ebbed away in the final effort she had made. Balthazar and Marguerite sat motionless, she at the head, and he at the foot of the bed. The two who had best known her goodness and inexhaustible kindness could not believe that she was really dead. The glance exchanged between father and daughter was freighted with many thoughts; she judged her father, and her father trembled already lest his daughter should be the instrument of vengeance. Memories crowded upon him, memories of the love that had filled his life, and of her whose last words seemed to carry an almost sacred authority which had so stamped them on his soul that it seemed as if he must for ever hear them ringing in his ears; but Balthazar mistrusted himself, he doubted whether he could resist the spirit which possessed him, he felt that the impulses of remorse had grown weaker already at the first menaces of a return of his passion, and he was afraid of himself.

When Mme. Claes was gone, every one felt that she had been the life and soul of the Maison Claes, and that now that soul was no more. And in the house itself, where her loss was felt to the full, the parlor where the noble Josephine still seemed to live was kept shut; nobody had the heart to enter it.

Society does not feel called upon to practise the virtues which it preaches to individuals; it offends hourly (though only in words) against its own canons; a jest prepares the way for base actions, a jest brings down anything beautiful

or lofty to the ordinary level. If a son sheds too many tears for his father's loss, he is ridiculous; if too few, he is held up to execration; and then society, having said its say, diverts itself by weighing the dead, scarcely yet cold, in its balance.

On the evening of the day when Mme. Claes died her friends discussed her over their whist, dropped flowers on her tomb in a pause while the cards were dealing, and paid their tribute to her noble character while sorting hearts and spades.

Then, after the usual lugubrious commonplaces, which are a kind of preliminary vocal exercise in social lamentation, and which are uttered with the same intonations and exactly the same amount of feeling all over France at every hour of the day, the whole chorus proceeded to calculate the amount of Mme. Claes' property.

Pierquin opened the discussion by pointing out that the lamented lady's husband had made her life so wretched that death was a happy release for her, and that it was a still greater blessing for her children. She would never have had sufficient firmness to oppose the wishes of the husband whom she adored, but now her fortune had passed out of Claes' hands. One and all began forthwith to reckon the probable amount of poor Mme. Claes' fortune, to calculate her savings (had she, or had she not, managed to put anything by?), and made out inventories of her jewels, and ransacked her drawers and her wardrobe, while her bereaved family were yet kneeling in prayer and tears by her bed of death.

With the experienced eye of a sworn valuer, Pierquin took in the situation at a glance. He was of the opinion that all Mme. Claes' property might be "got together again" (to use his own expression), and should amount to something like fifteen hundred thousand francs. A large part of this was represented by the forests of Waignies; that property had risen enormously in value in the last twelve years, and he made a rapid computation of the probable value of the trees of all ages from the oldest to the youngest. If that was not sufficient, Balthazar had probably enough to "cover" the children's claims. Mlle. Claes was, therefore, still, in his peculiar phraseology, a girl "worth four hundred thousand francs."

"But if she does not marry pretty soon," he added, "M. Claes will ruin his children; he is just the man to do it. If she were married she would be emancipated from her father's control, and could compel him to sell the forest of Waignies, to divide it among them, and to invest the shares of the minors in such a way that their father could not touch them."

Every one began to suggest the names of various young men of the province who might aspire to the hand of Mlle. Claes, but no one flattered the notary so far as to include him in the list. Pierquin raised so many objections to all the proposed suitors, and considered none of them worthy of Marguerite, that the company exchanged significant smiles, and amused themselves by teasing the notary, prolonging the process in provincial fashion. To Pierquin it seemed that Mme. Claes' death was likely to assist his cause, and he already began to cut up the dead for his own benefit.

"That good lady yonder," said he to himself, as he went home that night, "was as proud as a peacock; she would never have allowed me to marry a daughter of hers. Eh! eh! but if I play my cards well now, why should I not marry the girl? Old Claes has carbon on the brain, and does not care what becomes of his children; if I ask him for his daughter, as soon as I have convinced Marguerite that she must marry for her brothers' and sister's sake, he will be glad enough to be rid of a girl who may give him a good deal of trouble."

He fell asleep in the midst of his meditations on the advantages of this match, so attractive to him on so many grounds, a marriage which bade fair to secure his complete happiness. It would have been hard to find a more delicately lovely or a better bred girl in the province. Marguerite was as modest and graceful as the fair flower which Emmanuel had not dared to mention before her, lest he should reveal the secret wishes of his heart. She had religious principles and instinctive pride; his honor would be safe in her keeping. This marriage would not only gratify the vanity which enters more or less into every man's choice of a wife, but the notary's pride would be satisfied; an alliance with a twice-ennobled

family, which bore one of the most distinguished names in Flanders, would reflect lustre upon him.

The very next morning Pierquin went to his strong box, and thence drew several notes of a thousand francs each, which he pressed on Balthazar, in order to spare his cousin any petty pecuniary annoyances in his grief. Balthazar would no doubt feel touched by the delicate attention, and speak of it to his daughter with an accompanying panegyric on the good qualities of the notary and his kindness of heart. But Balthazar did nothing of the kind. Neither M. Claes nor his daughter saw anything extraordinary in this action; they were so taken up with their grief that they scarcely gave a thought to Pierquin. Indeed, Balthazar's despair was so great that those who had been disposed to blame his previous conduct now relented and forgave him, not on the score of his devotion to science, but because of the tardy remorse which would never repair the evil. The world is quite satisfied with grimaces; it takes current coin without inquiring too curiously whether or no the metal is base; the sight of pain has a certain dramatic interest, it is a sort of enjoyment in consideration of which the world is prepared to pardon everything, even to a criminal. The world craves sensation so eagerly that it absolves with equal readiness those who move it to laughter or to tears, without demanding a strict account of the means employed in either case.

Marguerite had just completed her nineteenth year when her father intrusted the management of the household into her hands; her brothers and sister remembered that their mother in the last moments of her life had bidden them obey their oldest sister, and her authority was dutifully recognized. Her delicate, pale face looked paler still by contrast with her mourning, as its sweet and patient expression was enhanced by sadness. From the very first it was abundantly evident that she possessed the womanly courage, the fortitude, and constant serenity which ministering angels surely bring to their task of healing, as they lay their green palm branches on aching hearts. But although she had early understood the

duties laid upon her, and had accustomed herself to hide her sorrow, it was none the less deep; and the serenity of her face was little in keeping with the vehemence of her grief. It was to be a part of her early experience to know the pain of repressing the sorrow and love with which the heart overflows; henceforward the generous instincts of youth were to be curbed continually at the bidding of tyrannous necessity. After her mother's death she found herself involved at once in intricate problems where serious interests were at stake, and this at an age when a girl usually thinks of nothing but pleasure. The hard discipline of pain has never been lacking for angelic natures.

A love which has vanity and greed for its twin supporters is the most stubborn of passions. Pierquin meant to lose no time in surrounding the heiress. The family had scarcely put on mourning when he found an opportunity of speaking to Marguerite; and began his operations with such skill, that she might well have been deceived by his tactics. But love had brought a faculty of clairvoyance, and Marguerite was not to be deceived, although Pierquin's good-nature, the good-nature of a notary who shows his affection by saving his client's money, gave some appearance of truth to his specious sentimentalities. The notary felt strong in his hazy relationship, in his acquaintance with family secrets and business affairs, in the esteem and friendship of Marguerite's father. The very abstractedness of that father, who was not likely to form any projects for his daughter's settlement in life, made for Pierquin's cause. He thought it quite impossible that Marguerite could have any predilection, and submitted his suit to her, though he was not clever enough to disguise beneath the flimsy veil of feigned passion the interested motives that had led him to scheme for this alliance, which are always hateful to young souls. In fact, they had changed places; the notary's revelation of selfishness was artless, and Marguerite was on her guard; for he thought that he had to do with a defenceless girl, and had no regard for the privileges of weakness.

"My dear cousin," he began, as he walked up and down the paths in the little garden, "you know my heart, and you know also how I shrink from intruding on your grief at such a moment. I ought not to be a notary, I am far too sensitive; I have such a feeling heart; but I am always forced to dwell on prosaic questions of interest when I would fain yield to the softer emotions which make life happy. It is very painful to me to be compelled to speak to you of matters which must jar upon your present feelings; but it cannot be helped. You have constantly been in my thoughts for the past few days. I have just discovered, by a curious chance, that your brothers' and your sister's fortunes, and even your own, are imperiled. It rests with you to save your family from utter ruin."

"What ought we to do?" she asked, somewhat alarmed at these remarks.

"You should marry," answered Pierquin.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," she exclaimed.

"You will marry," returned the notary, "after mature reflection on the critical condition of your affairs."

"How can my marriage save us from——?"

"That was what I was waiting to hear, cousin," he broke in. "Marriage emancipates a girl."

"Why should I be emancipated?" asked Marguerite.

"To put you in possession of your rights, my dear little cousin," replied the notary, with an air of triumph. "In that event you would take your share of your mother's fortune; and before you can take your share, her property must be liquidated, and that would mean a forced sale of the forest of Waignies. That once settled, all the capital would be realized, and your father would be bound, as guardian, to invest your sister's share and your brothers' in such a way that chemistry could not touch it."

"And suppose that none of these things happen—what then?" asked she.

"Why, in that case," said the notary, "your father would administer the estate. If he takes it into his head again to

make gold, there is nothing to prevent him from selling the forest of Waignies, and leaving you all as bare as shorn lambs. The forest of Waignies is worth about fourteen hundred thousand francs at this moment, but your father may cut down every stick of timber any day, and the thirteen hundred acres of land will not fetch three hundred thousand francs. This is almost sure to happen; and would it not be wiser to prevent it by raising the question at once, by emancipating yourself and demanding your share of the inheritance? You would save in other ways; your father would not fell the timber as he otherwise would do from time to time, to your prejudice. Just now chemistry is dormant, and of course he would invest the money realized by the sale in consols. The funds are at fifty-nine, so the dear children would have very nearly five thousand livres of interest on fifty thousand francs. Besides, as it is illegal to spend a minor's capital, your brothers and sister would find their fortune doubled by the time they came of age. Now, on the other hand, my word! . . . There you have the whole position! . . . Not only so, but your father has dipped pretty heavily into your mother's property; and when the inventory is made out, we shall see what the deficit amounts to. If there is a balance owing, you can take a mortgage on his lands, and save something in that way."

"For shame!" said Marguerite; "that would be an insult to my father. It is not so long since my mother's last words were uttered, that I should have forgotten them already. My father is incapable of robbing his children," she added, with bitter tears in her eyes. "You do not know him, M. Pierquin."

"But suppose, my dear cousin, that your father betakes himself to chemistry again——"

"We should be ruined, should we not?"

"Oh! utterly ruined! Believe me, Marguerite," he said, taking her hand and pressing it to his heart; "believe me, I should fail in my duty if I did not urge this course upon you. Your interests alone——"

"Monsieur," returned Marguerite coolly, as she withdrew her hand, "the real interests of my family demand that I should not marry. That was my mother's decision."

"Cousin!" he cried, with the conviction of a man of business who sees a fortune squandered, "you are rushing on your own destruction; you might as well fling your mother's money into the water. . . . Well, for you I will show the devotion of the warm friendship I feel for you. You do not know how much I love you; I have adored you ever since I saw you on the day of the last ball that your father gave. You were charming! You may trust the voice of the heart when it speaks of your interests, dear Marguerite. . . ."

There was a moment's silence; then he went on, "Yes, we will summon a family council, and emancipate you without consulting you about it."

"But what does 'emancipation' mean?"

"It means that you will come into possession of your rights."

"Then, if I can be emancipated in this way, why would you have me marry? . . . And to whom?"

Pierquin did his best to look tenderly at his cousin, but the expression of his face was so at variance with the hard eyes that usually only grow eloquent over money, that Marguerite fancied she saw an interested motive in this affectionate impromptu.

"You should marry a man whom you cared for . . . in your own circle. . . ." he got out. "You must have a husband, if it were only to manage your business affairs. You will be left face to face with your father; and can you hold your own against him, all by yourself?"

"Yes, monsieur; I shall find means to defend my brothers and sister when the time comes."

"Plague take the girl!" thought Pierquin to himself. Aloud he said, "No; you will never be able to stand out against him."

"Let us say no more about it," she replied.

"Good-bye, cousin. I shall do my best to serve you in spite

of yourself; I shall show you how much I love you by preventing a misfortune which every one in the town foresees."

"Thank you for the interest you take in me, but I beg of you neither to say nor do anything that can give my father the slightest annoyance."

Marguerite thoughtfully watched Pierquin's retreating figure, and could not help comparing his metallic voice, his manners, supple as steel springs, his glances, which expressed servility rather than gentleness, with the mute revelation of Emmanuel's feelings towards her, which impressed her as music or poetry might.

In every word we speak, in every action of our lives, there is a strange magnetic power which makes itself felt, and which never deceives. The glances, the tones of the voice, the lover's impassioned gestures, can be imitated; a clever actor may perhaps deceive an inexperienced girl, but to be successful he should have the field to himself. If there is another soul which vibrates in unison with every feeling that stirs her own, will she not soon find out the difference between love and its semblance? Emmanuel at this moment, like Marguerite herself, was under the influence of the clouds which had gathered about them ever since that first meeting in the pictures gallery; the blue heaven of love was hidden from their eyes. He had singled her out for a worship which, from its very hopelessness, was tender, mysterious, and reverent in its manifestations. Socially he was too far beneath Mlle. Claes to hope to be accepted as her husband; he was poor, and had nothing but a noble name to offer her. Then he had waited and waited for some slight encouragement, which Marguerite would not give him beneath the eyes of a dying mother.

Equally pure, they had not as yet spoken a word of love. Their joys had been the secret joys which unhappy souls must perforce linger over alone. The same hope had, indeed, thrilled them both, but they had trembled and remained apart; they seemed to fear themselves, conscious that each belonged too surely to the other. Emmanuel, therefore, feared

to touch with his lips the hand of the sovereign lady whom he had enshrined in his heart. The slightest careless contact would have brought such an intoxication of delight that his senses would have been beyond his control; he would no longer have been master of himself. But if they had never exchanged the slight yet significant, the innocent and solemn tokens of love which even the most timid lovers permit themselves, each dwelt no less in the other's heart, and both knew that they were ready to make the greatest sacrifices, the only pleasures that they could know. Ever since Mme. Claes' death the love in the depths of their hearts had been shrouded in mourning. The gloom in which they lived had deepened into night, and every ray of hope was quenched in tears. Marguerite's reserve had changed to something like coldness, for she felt bound to keep the vow which her mother had demanded of her; and now that she had more liberty than formerly, she became more distant. Emmanuel had shared in her mourning, feeling with his beloved that the least word or wish of love at such a time would be treason against the sovereign laws of the heart. So this passionate love was hidden away more closely than ever. The two souls were in unison, but sorrow had come between them and separated them as effectually as the timidity of youth and respect for the sufferings of her who was now dead; yet there was still left to them the magnificent language of the eyes, the mute eloquence of self-sacrifice, the knowledge that one thought always possessed them both—sublime harmonies of youth, the first steps of love in its infancy.

Emmanuel came every morning for news of Claes and of Marguerite, but he never came into the dining-room, where the family now sat, unless he brought a letter from Gabriel, or Balthazar invited him to enter. Numberless sympathetic thoughts were revealed in his first glance at the girl before him; the reserve that compelled him to assume a conventional demeanor harassed him; but he respected it, and shared the sorrow which caused it, and all the dew of his tears was shed on the heart of his beloved in a glance un-

spoiled by any after-thought. He lived so evidently in the present moment, he set such high value on a happiness which he thought so fleeting, that Marguerite's heart sometimes smote her, and she told herself that she was ungenerous not to hold out her hand and say, "Let us be friends."

Pierquin still continued his importunities with the obstinacy which is the patience of dulness, possessed by one idea. He judged Marguerite by the ordinary rules of the multitude when judging of women. He imagined that when the words "marriage," "liberty," and "fortune" had been let fall in her hearing they would take root in her mind, and spring up and blossom into wishes which he could turn to his own advantage, and he chose to think that her coldness was nothing but dissimulation. But in spite of all his polite attentions, he was an awkward actor; he sometimes forgot his part, and assumed the despotic tone of a man who is accustomed to make the final decision in all serious questions relating to family life. For her benefit he repeated consoling platitudes, the professional commonplaces which creep like snails over a sorrow, and leave behind them a track of barren words that profane the sanctity of grief. His tenderness was simply cajolery; he dropped his feigned melancholy at the door when he put on his overshoes and took up his umbrella. He took advantage of the privileges which his long intimacy with the Maison Claes had given him, using them as a means of ingratiating himself with the rest of the family to bring Marguerite to make a marriage which was already talked of in the town. So, in strong contrast to a true-hearted, devoted, and respectful love was opposed its selfish and calculating semblance. The characters of both men were in harmony with their manner. The one feigned a passion which he did not feel, and seized on every least advantage that gave him a hold on Marguerite; the other concealed his love, and trembled lest his devotion should be too apparent.

Some time after her mother's death, and, as it happened, in one day, Marguerite had an opportunity of comparing the two men whom she was in a position to judge, for she was

compelled to live in a social solitude which made her inaccessible to any who might have thought of asking her in marriage.

One day, after breakfast, on one of the sunniest mornings of early April, Emmanuel chanced to call just as M. Claes was going out. Balthazar found his own house almost unendurable, and spent a large part of the day in walking about the ramparts. Emmanuel turned, as though he meant to follow Balthazar, hesitated, seemed to gather up his courage, glanced at Marguerite, and stayed. Marguerite felt sure that he wished to speak with her, and asked him to go into the garden; she sent Félicie to sit with Martha, who was sewing in the ante-chamber on an upper floor, and then seated herself on a garden seat in full view of her sister and the old duenna.

"M. Claes is as much absorbed by his grief as he used to be by science," said the young man as he watched Balthazar pacing slowly across the court. "Every one in Douai is sorry for him; he goes about like a man who has not got his wits about him; he suddenly stops short without a reason, and gazes about him and sees nothing——"

"Every one expresses sorrow in a different way," said Marguerite, keeping back the tears. "What did you wish to say to me?" she added, with cold dignity, after a pause.

"Mademoiselle," Emmanuel replied in an unsteady voice, "I scarcely know if I have a right to speak to you as I am about to do. Please, think only of my desire to serve you, and believe that a schoolmaster may be so much interested in his pupils as to feel anxious about their future. Your brother Gabriel is over fifteen now; he is in the second class; it is surely time to think about his probable career, and to arrange his course of study accordingly. The decision rests of course with your father, but if he gives it no thought, it may be a serious matter for Gabriel. And yet it would be a mortification to your father, would it not, if you pointed out to him that he was neglecting his son? So, as things are, could you not yourself consult Gabriel as to his inclinations, and help

him to choose a course of study, so that if your father at a later day should wish him to enter the civil service or to make a soldier of him, Gabriel will be prepared for his post by a special training? I am sure that neither you nor M. Claes would wish to bring up Gabriel in idleness——"

"Oh, no!" said Marguerite. "Thank you, M. Emmanuel, you are quite right. When our mother had us taught how to make lace, and took such pains with our drawing, sewing, music, and embroidery, she often said that we could not tell what might happen, and that we must be prepared for everything. Gabriel ought to have resources within himself, so he must have a thorough education. But what is the best career for a man to choose?"

Emmanuel trembled with happiness. "Mademoiselle," he said, "Gabriel is at the head of his class in mathematics; if he were to enter the École polytechnique, I feel sure that he would acquire practical knowledge there which would be useful to him afterwards all through his life. He would be free to choose a career after his own inclinations after he left the École, and you would have gained time without binding him down to any programme. Men who distinguish themselves there are always sought after. Diplomatists, scholars, administrators, engineers, generals, sailors, magistrates, manufacturers, and bankers are all educated at the École. So it is nothing at all extraordinary that a young man belonging to a great or wealthy family should study to qualify for admission. If Gabriel should make up his mind to this, I would ask you . . . will you grant me my request? Say, Yes."

"What is it?"

"Let me be his tutor?" he said nervously.

Marguerite looked at M. de Solis, then she took his hand and said, "Yes."

She was silent for a moment, then she added in an unsteady voice:

"How much I value the delicacy which has led you to offer something that I can accept from you. In all that you have

just said I can see how much you have thought for us. Thank you."

Simply as these words were said, Emmanuel turned his head away lest Marguerite should see the tears of happiness in his eyes; he was overcome by the delight of being useful to her.

"I will bring them both to see you," he went on when he had recovered his self-possession. "To-morrow is a holiday." He rose and took leave of Marguerite, who shortly followed him to the house; as he crossed the court he still saw her standing by the dining-room door, and received a last friendly sign of farewell.

After dinner the notary came to call on M. Claes. Marguerite and her father were out in the garden, and Pierquin took up his position between them on the very bench where Emmanuel had sat that morning.

"My dear cousin," he said, addressing Balthazar, "I have come to talk about business to-night. Forty-two days have now elapsed since your lamented wife's demise——"

"I have not noticed how the time went," said Claes, brushing away a tear that rose at the technical term *demise*.

"Oh! monsieur," cried Marguerite, with a glance at the lawyer, "how can you?"

"But, my dear Marguerite, we lawyers are obliged to consider the limits of the time prescribed by law. This matter more particularly concerns you and your co-heirs. All M. Claes' children are under age, so within forty-five days of his wife's demise he is bound to have an inventory made out, so as to ascertain the value of the estate they held in common. How are we to find out if it is solvent or no, and whether there is enough to satisfy the minors' claims?"

Marguerite rose.

"Do not go away, cousin," said Pierquin; "this matter concerns you as well as your father. You know how deeply I feel your grief, but you must give your attention at once to these requirements of the law, otherwise you may both get into serious trouble. I am simply doing my duty as legal adviser to the family."

"He is quite right," said Claes.

"The time expires in two days," Pierquin continued, "and I must set to work to-morrow to make out the inventory, if it is only to postpone the payment of legacy duty which the Treasury will demand very shortly. The Treasury is not disturbed by compunction, and has no heart; it sets its claws in us at all seasons. So my clerk and I will come here every day from ten to four with M. Raparlier the valuer. As soon as we have finished here in the town, we will go into the country. We can talk about the forest of Waignies by and by. So that is settled, and now let us turn our attention to another point. We must call a family council, and appoint a guardian. M. Conyncks of Bruges is your nearest living relative, but he unluckily has become a Belgian citizen. You ought to write to him, cousin, and find out whether the old gentleman has any notion of settling in France; he has a fine property on this side of the frontier; and you might perhaps induce him and his daughter to move into French Flanders. If he declines to make a change, I will see about arranging for a council of some of the nearer remaining relations."

"What is the use of an inventory?" asked Marguerite.

"To find out how the property stands, and ascertain the assets and debts. When it is all clearly scheduled, the family council takes such steps as it deems necessary on behalf of the minors——"

"Pierquin," said Claes, as he rose from the garden-seat, "do anything that you think necessary to protect my children's interests, but spare us the distress of selling anything that belonged to my dear wife——"

He did not finish the sentence, but he spoke with so much dignity, there was such deep feeling in his tones, that Marguerite took her father's hand in hers and kissed it.

"I will return to-morrow, then," said Pierquin.

"Come and breakfast with us," said Balthazar. He seemed to be collecting scattered memories together, for in a moment he exclaimed: "But in my marriage contract, which was

drawn up according to the custom of Hainault, I released my wife from the obligation of making an inventory, in order to spare her the worry and annoyance, and it is quite probable that I was likewise released——"

"Oh! how fortunate!" cried Marguerite. "It would have given us so much trouble——"

"Very well," said Pierquin, who was rather put out; "we will look into your marriage contract to-morrow."

"Then you did not know of this?" said Marguerite, an inquiry which put an end to the interview, for the notary was so much embarrassed by his cousin's home-thrust that he was glad to abandon the discussion.

"The devil is in it!" said he to himself as he crossed the courtyard. "That man, for all his abstractedness, can find his wandering wits in the nick of time, and put a stop to our precautions against him. He will squander his children's money, it is as plain as that two and two make four. Talk of business to a girl of nineteen, and she gets sentimental over it! Here am I racking my brains to save the property of those children by regular means, by coming to an understanding with old Conyncks, and this is the end of it! I have thrown away all my chances with Marguerite; she is sure to ask her father why I wanted an inventory of the property, which she now fancies to be quite unnecessary, and Claes, of course, will tell her that lawyers have a craze for drawing up documents; that we are notaries first, and cousins and friends, and what not, afterwards, all sorts of rubbish in fact. . . ."

He slammed the door, storming inwardly at clients who let their sentimentality ruin them.

Balthazar was right. The inventory did not take place. So nothing was done to limit or define the father's powers over his children's property.

Several months went by, and brought no changes to the Maison Claes. Gabriel, under the able tuition of M. de Solis, studied hard, learned the necessary foreign languages, and prepared to pass the entrance examination at the École poly-

technique. Félicie and Marguerite lived in absolute retirement; but, nevertheless, they spent the summer at their father's country house, in order to economize. M. Claes was much occupied by his business affairs; he paid his debts, raising the money on his own property, and went to visit the forest of Waignies.

By the middle of the year 1817 his grief had gradually abated, and he began to feel depressed by the dulness and sameness of the life he led. At first he resisted temptation bravely, and would not allow himself to think of chemistry; but the love of science was only dormant, and in spite of himself his thoughts turned towards his old pursuits. Then he thought he would not begin his experiments; he would not take up his science practically, he would confine himself to theory; but the longer he dwelt with these theories, the stronger his passion grew, and he began to equivocate with himself. He asked himself whether he was really bound not to prosecute his researches, and remembered how his wife had refused his oath. He had certainly vowed to himself that he would make no further attempt to solve the great Problem, but the road to success had never been so certain and so plain; was he not surely free to change his mind now that the way was clear? He was then fifty-nine years of age, and his idea possessed him now with the dogged fixity which slowly develops into monomania. Outward circumstances also combined to shake his wavering loyalty.

Europe was at peace. Men of science of various nationalities, cut off from all communication with each other by twenty years of wars, were now free to correspond and to communicate their discoveries and theories to each other. Science was making great strides. Claes found that modern discoveries had a bearing, which his fellow-chemists did not suspect, upon the Problem of the Absolute. Learned men who were devoting their lives to the solution of other scientific enigmas began to think, as he did, that light and heat, and galvanism and electricity, were only different effects of the same cause, and that all the various substances which

had hitherto been regarded as different elements were merely allotropic forms of the same unknown element. The fear that some other chemist might effect the reduction of metals, and find the principle of electricity (two discoveries which would lead to the solution of the Problem of the Absolute), raised the enthusiasm, which the people of Douai called a mania, to the highest pitch; only those who have felt a like passionate love of science, or who have known the tyranny of ideas, can imagine the force of the paroxysm. Balthazar's frenzy was but the more violent because it had been so long subdued, and now broke out afresh.

Marguerite, who had been watching her father very closely, divined this crisis, and opened the long-closed parlor. She thought that if they sat in that room once more, old painful memories of her mother's death would be awakened, and would act as a restraint, and she was to some extent successful. For a little while her father's grief was reawakened, and the inevitable plunge into the abyss was deferred, but it was only for a little while. She determined to go into society once more, and so to distract Balthazar's attention from these thoughts. Several good marriages were proposed for her, over which Claes deliberated, but Marguerite said that until she was twenty-five she would not marry. In spite of all his daughter's endeavors, in spite of remorseful inner struggles, Balthazar began his experiments again in the early days of the winter. At first they were conducted secretly, but it was not easy to hide such occupations as his from the inquisitive eyes of the maid-servants.

One day, therefore, while Marguerite was dressing, Martha said to her, "Mademoiselle, it is all over with us! That wretch of a Mulquinier (who is the devil himself in human shape, for I have never seen him cross himself) has gone up into the attic again. There is the master on the highroad to hell! Heaven send that he may not be the death of you all, as he was the death of the poor dear mistress!"

"Impossible!" said Marguerite.

"Come and see their goings-on for yourself."

Mlle. Claes sprang to the window, and saw, in fact, a thin streak of smoke rising from the laboratory chimney.

"I shall be twenty-one in a few months' time," she thought, "and then our property must be squandered no longer; I must find a way to prevent it."

When Balthazar finally gave way to his passion, his respect for his children's interests was, of course, less of a restraint than his affection for his wife had been. Such barriers were easily overleapt, his conscience was more elastic, his passion had grown stronger. Glory, and hard work, and hope, and misery lay before him; he set out on his way with the energy of full and entire conviction. He felt so sure of the outcome of it all that he worked day and night, flinging himself into his pursuits with a zeal that alarmed his daughters; they did not know that a man's health seldom suffers from the work that he loves and does for its own sake.

As soon as her father began his experiments, Marguerite reduced the expenses of housekeeping, and became almost as parsimonious as a miser. Josette and Martha entered into her plans, and seconded her loyally. As for Claes, he was scarcely aware of these retrenchments; he did not notice that they had been reduced to the bare necessaries of life. He began by staying away from the family breakfast; then the whole day was spent in the laboratory, and he only came down to dinner, and sat for a few silent hours afterwards in the evening in the parlor with the two girls. He never spoke to them; he did not seem to hear them when they wished him good-night; he mechanically let them kiss him on both cheeks. Such neglect as this might have brought about serious consequences if Marguerite had not wielded a mother's authority, if the love in her heart had not been a safeguard.

Pierquin had discontinued his visits entirely; in his opinion nothing could save his cousins from utter ruin. Balthazar's estates, which were worth about two hundred thousand crowns, and brought in sixteen thousand francs, were already incumbered with mortgages to the amount of three hundred

thousand francs. Claes had inaugurated his second epoch of scientific enthusiasm by a heavy loan. At that moment his income just sufficed to pay the interest on his debts; and as, with the improvidence characteristic of men who live for an idea, he had made over all the rents of his farms to Marguerite to defray the expenses of the housekeeping, the notary calculated that the end must come in three years' time, when everything would go to rack and ruin, and the sheriff's officers would eat up all that Balthazar had left. Under the influence of Marguerite's coldness, Pierquin's indifference had almost become hostility. He meant to secure his retreat in case his cousin should grow so poor that he might no longer wish to marry her, and spoke of the Claes everywhere in a pitying tone.

"Poor things, they are in a fair way to be ruined," said he. "I did everything I could to save them; but, would you believe it? Mlle. Claes herself set her face against every plan by the law could step in to secure those children from starvation."

Emmanuel, through his uncle's influence, had been appointed headmaster of the Collège de Douai, his own personal qualifications having eminently fitted him for the post. He came almost every evening to see the two girls, who summoned their old duenna to the parlor so soon as their father left them for the night. Always at the same hour they heard the knock at the door: young de Solis was never late. For the past three months Marguerite's mute gratitude and graciousness had given him confidence; he had developed, and was himself. His purity of soul shone like a flawless diamond, and Marguerite learned to know the full value of his steadfast strength of character, when she saw that it had its source in the depths of his nature. She saw the blossoms open out one by one; hitherto she had only known of them by their fragrance. Every day Emmanuel realized some hope of hers, new splendors lighted up the enchanted country of love, the clouds vanished, the sky grew clear and serene, unsuspected treasures which had been hidden in the

gloom shone forth. For Emmanuel was more at his ease; he could display the winning grace of the heart, the infectious gaiety of youth, the simplicity that comes of a life of study, the treasures of a fastidious mind and unsophisticated nature, the innocent merriment that suits so well with youthful love. Marguerite and Emmanuel understood each other better; together they had explored the depths of their hearts, and had found the same thoughts, pearls of the same lustre, blended notes of harmony, as clear and sweet as the magic music which holds the divers spellbound under the sea. They had come to know each other through the interchange of ideas in the course of those evening talks, studying each other with a curiosity that grew to be a delicate imaginative sympathy. There was no bashfulness on either side, but perhaps some coquetry. The hours which Emmanuel spent with the two girls under Martha's eyes reconciled Marguerite to her life of anguish and resignation; the love that grew unconsciously was her support in her troubles. Emmanuel's affection expressed itself with the natural grace that is irresistible, with the delicate and delightful wit that reveals fresh phases of deep feeling, as the facets of a precious stone set free all its hidden fires; the wonderful devices that love teaches lovers, which render a woman loyally responsive to the hand of the artist who sets new life into the old forms, to the tones of the voice which gave a new significance to a phrase each time it is repeated. Love is not merely a sentiment, it is an art. A bare word, a hesitation, a nothing, reveals to a woman the presence of the great and sublime artist who can touch her heart without withering it. The further Emmanuel went, the more charming were the ways in which his love expressed itself.

"I have outstripped Pierquin," he said one evening; "I am the bearer of bad tidings that he is going to bring, but I thought I would rather tell them myself. Your father has sold your forest to some speculators, who have taken the timber as it stands to sell again in smaller quantities; the trees have been cut down already, and all the trunks have

been taken away. Three hundred thousand francs were paid down at once, and this was sent to Paris to discharge M. Claes' debts there; but in order to clear his debts entirely, he has been forced to assign to his creditors a hundred thousand francs out of the hundred thousand crowns still due to him on the purchase money."

Just at that point Pierquin came in.

"Well, my dear cousin," he said, "you are ruined, you see! I told you how it would be, but you would not listen to me. Your father has a good appetite; he only made one bite of your forest. Your guardian, M. Conyncks, is away at Amsterdam, where he is negotiating the sale of his Belgian estates, and while his back is turned Claes seizes the opportunity to do this stroke of business. It is hardly fair. I have just written to old Conyncks, but it will be all up with you by the time he gets here. You will be obliged to take proceedings against your father. It will not take very long to settle the affair in a court of law, but Claes will not come out of it very well; M. Conyncks will be compelled to take action, the law requires it in such cases. And all this has come of your wilfulness! Do you see now how prudent I was, and how devoted to your interests?"

"I have some good news for you, mademoiselle," said young de Solis in his gentle voice: "Gabriel has been admitted as a pupil at the École polytechnique; the difficulties which were raised at first have been cleared away."

Marguerite thanked him by a smile, and said, "Then I shall find a use for my savings.—Martha," she added, speaking to the old servant, "we must begin at once to make ready Gabriel's outfit. Poor Félicie, we both must work hard," she said, with a kiss on her sister's forehead.

"He will return home to-morrow, and you will have him here for about ten days; on the 15th of November he must be in Paris."

"Cousin Gabriel is well advised," said the notary, as he scanned the headmaster; "he will have to make his way in the world. But now, my dear Marguerite, the honor of the family is at stake; will you listen to me this time?"

"Not if it is a question of marriage."

"But what will you do?"

"Nothing, cousin. . . . What should I do?"

"You are of age."

"I shall be of age in a few days' time. Is there any course which you can suggest that will reconcile our interests with our duty to our father and with the honor of the family?"

"You can do nothing, cousin, without your uncle. That is clear. When he comes back to Douai I will call again."

"Good-evening, monsieur," said Marguerite.

"The poorer she grows, the more airs she gives herself," thought the notary. Aloud he said, "Good-evening, mademoiselle.—M. de Solis, I have the honor to wish you good-day," and he went away without paying any attention to Félicie or to Martha.

When the door closed on him, Emmanuel spoke, with hesitation in his voice. "I have been studying the Code for the past two days," he said, "and I have taken counsel with an old lawyer, one of my uncle's friends. If you will allow me, I will go to Amsterdam to-morrow. . . . Listen, dear Marguerite . . ."

He had spoken her name for the first time. She thanked him by a glance and a gentle inclination of the head, and listened smiling, though her eyes were full of tears.

"You can speak before my sister," said Marguerite; "she has no need to learn resignation to a life of hardship and toil, she is so brave and sweet, but from this discussion she will learn how much we need our courage."

The two sisters clasped each other's hands, as if to renew the pledge of the closer union brought about by a common trouble.

"Leave us, Martha."

"Dear Marguerite," Emmanuel began, and something of the happiness that he felt at thus acquiring one of the least privileges of affection could be felt in his voice, "I have the names and addresses of the purchasers, who have not yet paid the balance of two hundred thousand francs for the felled

timber. To-morrow, if you give your consent, a lawyer acting in M. Conyncks' name shall serve a writ of attachment on them. Your great-uncle will return in a week's time. He will call a family council and emancipate Gabriel, who is now eighteen. When that has been done, you and your brother will be in a position to demand your rights, and you can require your share of the proceeds of this sale of the wood. M. Claes could not refuse you the two hundred thousand francs which have been attached; as for the remaining hundred thousand francs, they could be secured to you by a mortgage on this house that you are living in. M. Conyncks will demand securities for the three hundred thousand francs which belong to Mademoiselle Félicie and to Jean, and your father will be obliged to mortgage his property in the plains of Orchies, which are already encumbered with a debt of a hundred thousand crowns. The law regards mortgages for the benefit of minors as a first charge, so everything will be saved. M. Claes' hands will be tied for the future; your landed property is inalienable; he will be unable to borrow any more money on his own, which will be mortgaged beyond their value, and the whole arrangement will be a family affair; there will be no lawsuits and no scandal. Your father will perforce set about his investigations less recklessly, if, indeed, he does not give them up altogether."

"Yes," said Marguerite, "but how shall we live? There will be no interest paid on the hundred thousand francs secured to us on this house so long as we continue to live in it. The farms in the plains of Orchies will bring in just enough to pay interest on the mortgages. What shall we do?"

"Well, in the first place," said Emmanuel, "if you invest Gabriel's remaining fifty thousand francs in the funds, at present prices it will bring in four thousand livres; that will be sufficient to pay all his expenses at the École in Paris. Gabriel cannot touch the principal nor the money secured to him on this house until he comes of age, so you need not fear that he will squander a penny of it, and you will have one expense the less. In the second place, is there not your own share, a hundred and fifty thousand francs?"

"My father will be sure to ask me for them," she cried in dismay, "and I could not refuse him."

"Well, then, dear Marguerite, you can secure the money by robbing yourself. Invest it in the funds in your brother's name; it would bring you in twelve or thirteen thousand livres, and you could manage to live on that. An emancipated minor cannot touch his principal without the consent of the family council, so you will gain three years of freedom from anxiety. In three years' time your father will either have solved his problem, or, as is more probable, he will have given it up as hopeless; and when Gabriel comes of age he can transfer the stock into your name, and the accounts can be finally settled among the four of you."

Marguerite asked for an explanation of the provisions of the law which she could not understand at first, and again they went over every point. It was certainly a novel situation—two lovers poring over a copy of the Code, which Emmanuel had brought with him in order to make the position of minors clear to Marguerite. Love's penetration came to the aid of her woman's quick-wittedness, and she soon grasped the gist of the matter.

The next day Gabriel returned home. M. de Solis came also, and from him Balthazar heard the news of his son's admission to the École polytechnique. Claes expressed his acknowledgments by a wave of the hand. "I am very glad to hear it," he said; "so Gabriel is to be a scientific man, is he?" and the head of the house returned to his laboratory.

"Gabriel," said Marguerite, as Balthazar went, "you must work hard, and you must not be extravagant. Do as others do, but be very careful; and while you are in Paris spend your holidays with our friends and relations there, and do not contract the expensive habits which ruin young men. Your necessary expenses will amount to nearly a thousand crowns, so you will have a thousand francs left for pocket money. That should be enough."

"I will answer for him," said Emmanuel de Solis, laying his hand on his pupil's shoulder.

A month later M. de Conyncks and Marguerite had obtained all the required guarantee from M. Claes. Emmanuel's prudent advice had been approved and carried out to the letter. Balthazar felt ashamed of the sale of the forest. His creditors had harassed him, until he had been driven to take this rash step to escape from them; and now, when he was confronted with the consequences of his deeds, when he was face to face, moreover, with his stern cousin, who was inflexible where honor was concerned, he did all that was required of him. He was, in fact, not ill pleased to repair so easily the mischief he had half unconsciously wrought. He put his signature to the various papers laid before him with the preoccupied air of a man for whom science was the one reality, and all things else of no moment. He had no more foresight than the negro who sells his wife in the morning for a drop of brandy, and sheds tears over her loss in the evening. Apparently he could not look forward: even the immediate future was beyond his ken; he never stopped to ask himself what must happen when his last ducat had been thrown into the furnace, and prosecuted his researches as recklessly as before. He neither knew nor cared to know that the house in which he lived was his only in name, and, like his estates, had passed into other hands; he did not realize the fact that (thanks to the stringent regulations of the law) he could not raise another penny on the property of which he was in a manner the legal guardian.

The year 1818 went by, and no untoward event occurred. The two girls just managed to defray the necessary expenses of the housekeeping and of Jean's education with the interest of the money invested in Gabriel's name, which he punctually remitted every quarter. M. de Solis lost his uncle in the December of that year.

One morning Marguerite heard from Martha that her father had sold his collection of tulips, the furniture of the state apartments, and all their remaining plate. She was compelled to repurchase the necessary silver for daily use herself, and to have it marked with her own initials. Hitherto

she had watched Balthazar's depredations in silence; but after dinner that evening she asked Félicie to leave her alone with her father, and when he had seated himself by the fireside as usual, Marguerite spoke.

"You are the master here, dear father," she said; "you can sell everything, even your children. We will all obey you without a murmur; but I must point out to you that we have no money left, that we have scarcely enough to live upon this year, and that Félicie and I have to work night and day to earn the money to pay for Jean's school expenses by the lace dress which we are making. Father dear, give up your researches, I implore you."

"You are right, dear child; in six weeks they will come to an end. I shall have discovered the Absolute, or the Absolute will be proved to be undiscoverable. You will have millions——"

"But leave us bread to eat meanwhile," pleaded Marguerite.

"Bread? Is there no bread in the house?" said Claes in blank dismay. "No bread in the house of a Claes! What has become of all our property?"

"You have cut down the forest of Waignies. The ground has not been cleared as yet, so it brings in nothing, and the rents of the farms at Orchies are not sufficient to pay interest on the mortgages."

"Then how do we live?" he asked.

Marguerite held up her needle.

"The interest on Gabriel's money helps us," she added, "but it is not enough. I shall just make both ends meet at the end of the year if you do not overwhelm me with bills that I did not expect, for you say nothing about your purchases. I feel quite sure that I have enough to meet my quarterly expenses, it is all planned out so carefully,—and then a bill is sent in for soda or potash, or zinc or sulphur, and all sorts of things."

"Have patience and wait another six weeks, dear child, and then I will be very prudent. You shall see wonders, my little Marguerite."

"It is quite time to think of your own affairs. You have sold everything; pictures, tulips, silver-plate—nothing is left to us; but at any rate you will not run into debt again?"

"I am determined to make no more debts."

"No more debts!" she cried. "Then there are debts?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing, mere trifles," he said reddening, as he lowered his eyes.

For the first time in her life Marguerite felt humiliated by her father's humiliation; it was so painful to her, that she could not bring herself to inquire into the matter; but a month later a messenger came from a Douai bank with a bill of exchange for ten thousand francs, which bore Claes' signature. When Marguerite asked for a day's delay, and expressed her regret that she had not received any notice and so was unprepared to meet the bill, the messenger informed her that Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville held nine others, each for a like amount, which would fall due in consecutive months.

"It is all over with us!" cried Marguerite, "the time has come."

She sent for her father, and walked restlessly up and down the parlor speaking to herself, "A hundred thousand francs, or our father must go to prison! . . . What shall I do? Oh! what shall I do?"

Balthazar did not come. Marguerite grew tired of waiting, and went up to the laboratory. She paused in the doorway, and saw her father standing in a brilliant patch of sunlight in the middle of a vast room filled with machinery and dusty glass vessels; the tables that stood here and there were loaded with books and numbered and ticketed specimens of various substances; yet other specimens were heaped on the shelves, along the walls, or flung down beside the furnaces. There was something repugnant to orderly Flemish prejudices in all this confused litter. Balthazar's tall figure rose above a collection of flasks and retorts; he had thrown off his coat and rolled back his sleeves above the elbows like a workman, his shirt was unfastened, exposing his chest, covered with white

hair. He was gazing with frightful intentness on an air pump, from which he never took his eyes. The receiver of the instrument was covered by a lens constructed of two convex glasses, the space between them being filled with alcohol; the sunlight that entered the room through one of the panes of the rose window (the rest had been carefully blocked up) was thus focused on the contents of the receiver. The plate of the receiver was insulated, and communicated with the wire of a huge voltaic battery. Lemulquinier was busy at the moment in shifting the plate of the receiver, so that the lens might be maintained in a position perpendicular to the rays of the sun; he raised his face, which was black with dust, and shouted, "Ah! mademoiselle, keep away!"

She looked at her father, who knelt on one knee before his apparatus, perfectly indifferent to the rays of sunlight that shone full on his face and lit up his hair till it gleamed like silver; his brows were knotted, every muscle of his face was tense with painful expectation. The strange things strewn around him, the mysterious machinery dimly visible in the semi-darkness of the rest of the attic, everything about her combined to alarm Marguerite.

"Our father is mad," she said to herself in her dismay.

Then she went up to him and whispered in his ear, "Send away Lemulquinier."

"No, no, child, I want him; I am waiting to see the result of an experiment which has never been tried before. For the last three days we have been on the watch for a ray of sunlight; everything is ready, I am about to concentrate the solar rays on these metals in a perfect vacuum, submitting them simultaneously to the action of a current of electricity. In another moment, you see, I shall employ the most powerful agents known to chemistry, and I alone——"

"Oh, father! instead of reducing metal to gas, you should keep it to pay your bills of exchange——"

"Wait! wait!"

"But M. Mersktus is here, father; he must have ten thousand francs by four o'clock."





"Madness!" there was something so majestic in his manner as he repeated the word that his daughter trembled



"Yes, yes, presently. It is quite right; I did sign a bill for some small amount which would fall due this month. I thought I should have discovered the Absolute before this. Good heavens! if I only had a July sun, the experiment would be over by this time."

He ran his fingers through his hair, the tears came into his eyes, and dropped into an old cane-seated chair.

"That is quite right, sir," said Lemulquinier. "It is all the fault of that rascally sun that won't shine enough, the lazy beggar."

Neither master nor man seemed to remember Marguerite's presence.

"Leave us, Mulquinier," she said.

"Ah!" cried Claes, "I have it! We will try a new experiment."

"Father, never mind the experiments now," said the young girl when they were alone. "Here is a demand for a hundred thousand francs, and we have not a farthing. You honor is involved; you must come down and leave the laboratory. What will become of you if you are imprisoned? Shall your white hair and the name of Claes be soiled with the disgrace of bankruptcy? It shall not be, I will not have it, I will find strength to combat your madness; it would be dreadful to see you wanting bread in your old age. Open your eyes to our position; come to your senses at last!"

"Madness!" cried Balthazar, rising to his feet. A light shone in the eyes he fixed on his daughter's face, *"Madness!"* There was something so majestic in his manner as he repeated the word that his daughter trembled. He folded his arms. "Ah! your mother would never have uttered that word," he went on. "She did not shut her eyes to the importance of my researches; she studied science that she might understand me; she saw that I was working for humanity, that there was nothing selfish nor sordid in me. I see that a wife's love rises far above a daughter's affection; yes, love is the loftiest of all feelings. Come to my senses!" he went on, striking his breast. "When did I take leave of them?

Am I not myself? We are poor, are we? Very well, my daughter, I choose to be poor; do you understand? I am your father, and you must obey me. You shall be rich again when I wish it. As for your fortune, it is a mere nothing. When I find a solvent of carbon, I will fill the parlor downstairs with diamonds, but even that is a pitiful trifle compared with the wonders for which I am seeking. Surely you can wait when I am doing my utmost, and spending my life in superhuman efforts to——"

"Father, I have no right to ask an account of the four millions which have melted away in this garret. I will say nothing of my mother, but your science killed her. If I were married, I should no doubt love my husband as my mother loved you; I would sacrifice everything for him, just as my mother sacrificed everything for you. I am doing as she bade me, I have given you all I had to give; you have had proof of it, I would not marry lest you should be compelled to render an account of your guardianship. But let us say no more about the past, let us think of the present. You have brought things to a crisis, and I have come here to put it before you. We must have money to meet these bills; do you understand me? There is absolutely nothing left but the portrait of our ancestor Van Claes. I have come in my mother's name; my mother, whose heart failed her when she had to struggle for her children's sake against their father's will, bade me resist you; I have come in my brothers' name and my sister's; father, I have come in the name of all the Claes to bid you cease your experiments, and to retrieve your losses before you turn to chemistry again. If you steel yourself against me, if you use your authority over us only to kill us,—your ancestors, and your own honor plead for me, and what can chemistry urge against the voices of your family? I have been your daughter but too well."

"And now you mean to be my executioner," he said in a feeble voice.

Marguerite turned and fled. She could not trust herself to play her part any longer; her mother's voice rang in her ears,

"Love your father, and do not cross him—more than you can help!"

"Here is a pretty piece of work of mademoiselle's," said Lemulquinier, as he came down into the kitchen for his breakfast. "We had just about put our finger on the Secret; we only wanted a blink of July sunlight, and the master—ah! what a man that is! he stands in the shoes of Providence, as you may say. There was not *that,"* he said to Josette, clicking his thumb nail against his front teeth, "between us and the secret, when, presto! up she comes and makes a fuss about some nonsensical bills——"

"Good, then," cried Martha, "pay them yourself out of your wages!"

"Am I to eat dry bread? Where is the butter?" demanded Lemulquinier, turning to Josette.

"And where is the money to buy it with?" the cook answered tartly. "What, you old villain, if you can make gold in your devil's kitchen, why don't you make butter? It is not near so hard to make, and it would fetch something in the market, and go some way towards making the pot boil. All the rest of us are eating dry bread. The young ladies are living on dry bread and walnuts, and you want to be better fed than your betters? Mademoiselle has only a hundred francs a month to spend for the whole household; there is only one dinner for us all. If you want luxuries, you have your furnaces upstairs, where you fritter away pearls, till they talk of nothing else all over the town. Just look for your roast fowls up there!"

Lemulquinier took up his bread and left the kitchen.

"He will buy something with his own money," said Martha; "all the better, it is so much saved. Isn't he a stingy old heathen?"

"We must starve him, that is the only way," said Josette. "He has not waxed a single floor this week, that he hasn't; he is always up above, and I am doing his work; he may just as well pay me for it by treating us to a few herrings: if he brings any home I shall look after them."

"Ah!" said Martha, "there is Mlle. Marguerite crying. Her old wizard of a father would gobble down the house without saying grace. In my country they would have burned him alive for a sorcerer long before this; but they have no more religion here than Moorish infidels."

In spite of herself, Mlle. Claes was sobbing as she came through the gallery. She reached her room, sought for her mother's letter, and read as follows:—

"My Child,—If God so wills, my spirit will be with you as you read these lines, the last that I shall ever write; they are full of love for my dear little ones, left to the mercy of a fiend who was too strong for me, a fiend who will have devoured your last morsel of bread, as he gnawed my life and my love! You knew, my darling, if I loved your father, and my love for him is failing now as I die, for I am taking precautions against him: I am doing that which I cannot bring myself to confess in my lifetime. Yes, in the depths of my grave I treasure a last resource for you, until the day comes when you will know the last extremity of misfortune. If he has brought you to absolute want, my child; if the honor of our house is at stake, you must ask M. de Solis, if he is still living, or if not, his nephew, our good Emmanuel, for a hundred and seventy thousand francs, which are yours, and which will enable you to live. And if at last you find that nothing can check this passion, if the thought of his children's welfare proves no stronger a restraint than did a regard for my happiness, and he should wrong you still further, then leave your father, for your lives at any rate must not be sacrificed to his. I could not desert him; my place was at his side. It rests with you, Marguerite, to save the family; you must protect Gabriel, Jean, and Félicie at all costs. Take courage, be the guardian angel of the Claes; and you must be firm, Marguerite, I dare not say be ruthless; but if the evil that has been already wrought is to be even partially repaired, you must save something, you must think of yourself as being on the brink of

dire poverty, for nothing can stem the course of the passion which took all I had in the world from me. So, my child, out of the fulness of affection you must refuse to listen to the promptings of affection; you may have to deceive your father, but the deceptions will be a glory to you, there will be hard things to say and do, and you will feel guilty, but they will be heroic deeds if they are done to protect your defenceless brothers and sisters. Our good and upright M. de Solis assured me of this, and never was there a clearer and more scrupulous conscience than his. I could never have brought myself to speak the words I have written, not even at the point of death. And yet—be tender and reverent in this hideous struggle; soften your refusals, and resist him on your knees. Not even death will have put an end to my sorrow and my tears . . . Kiss my dear children for me now that you are to become their sole guardian, and may God and all the saints be with you, JOSEPHINE."

A receipt was enclosed from the Messieurs de Solis, uncle and nephew, for the amount deposited in their hands by Mme. Claes, which they undertook to refund to her children if her family should present the document.

Marguerite called the old duenna, and Martha hurried upstairs to her mistress, who bade her go to ask M. Emmanuel de Solis to come to the Maison Claes.

"How noble and honorable he is!" she thought; "he never breathed a word of this to me, and he has made all my troubles and difficulties his."

Emmanuel came before Martha had returned from her errand.

"You have kept a secret which concerned me," she said, as she held out the paper.

Emmanuel bent his head.

"Marguerite, this means that you are in great distress?" he asked, and tears came to his eyes.

"Ah! yes. You will help me, you whom my mother calls 'our good Emmanuel,'" she said, as she gave him the letter;

and, in spite of her trouble, she felt a sudden thrill of joy that her mother approved her choice.

"I have been ready to live or die for you ever since I saw you in the picture gallery," he answered, with tears of happiness and sorrow in his eyes; "but I did not know, and I waited, I did not even dare to hope that one day you would let me die for you. If you really know me, you know that my word is sacred, so you must forgive me for keeping my word to your mother; I could only obey her wishes to the letter, I had no right to exercise my own judgment——"

"You have saved us!" she broke in, as she took his arm, and they went down together to the parlor.

When Marguerite had learned the history of the trust fund she told him the whole miserable story of the straits to which they were reduced.

"We must meet the bills at once," said Emmanuel, "if they have been deposited with Mersktus, you will save interest on them. Then I will send you the remaining seventy thousand francs. My poor uncle left me that amount in gold ducats, so it will be easy to bring them here, and no one will know about it."

"Yes," she said, "bring them at night; our father will be asleep, and we can hide them somewhere. If he knew that I had any money, he might take it from me by force. Oh! Emmanuel, to be suspicious of one's own father!" she said, and burst into tears as she leant her forehead against his breast.

It was in this piteous and gracious entreaty for protection that Marguerite's love spoke for the first time; love had been surrounded from its first beginnings by sorrow, and had grown familiar with pain, but her heart was too full, and at this last trouble it overflowed.

"What is to be done? What will become of us? He sees nothing of all this; he has not a thought for us nor for himself, for I cannot think how he can live in the garret, it is like a furnace."

"But what can you expect of a man who at every moment

of his life cries, like Richard III., 'My kingdom for a horse?'" answered Emmanuel. "He will be inexorable, and you must be equally unyielding. You can pay his bills, and let him have your fortune if you will, but your brothers' and sister's money is neither yours nor his."

"Let him have my fortune!" she repeated, grasping Emmanuel's hand in hers, and looking at him with sparkling eyes. "This is *your* advice to me? And Pierquin told me lies without end, for fear I should part with it."

"Alas!" he said, "perhaps I too am selfish after my own fashion. Sometimes I would have you without a penny, for it seems to me that so you would be nearer to me; sometimes I would have you rich and happy, and then I feel how poor and petty it is to think that the empty pomp of wealth could keep us apart."

"Dear let us talk no more about ourselves——"

"Ourselves!" he exclaimed in ecstasy; then after a moment he went on, "The evil is great, no doubt, but it is not irreparable."

"It lies with us to repair it; the family has no longer a head. He has utterly forgotten all that he owes to himself and his children, and has lost all sense of right and wrong—for he who was so high-minded, so generous, and so upright, who should have been his children's protector, has squandered their property in defiance of the law. To what depths he must have fallen! Good God! what can he think to find?"

"Unluckily, dear Marguerite, however culpable he may be as the head of a family, he is quite right from a scientific point of view to act as he does. Some score of men perhaps in all Europe are capable of understanding him and admire him, though every one else says that he is mad. Still, you are perfectly justified in refusing to surrender the children's money. There is an element of chance in every great discovery. If your father still persists in working out his problem, he will discover the solution without this reckless expenditure, and very possibly just at the moment when he gives it up as hopeless."

"It is well for my poor mother that she died!" said Marguerite. "She would have suffered a martyrdom a thousand times worse than death. The first shock of her collision with science killed her, and there seems to be no end to the struggle——"

"There will be an end to it," said Emmanuel, "when you have absolutely nothing left. There will be an end to M. Claes' credit, and then he will be forced to stop."

"Then he may as well stop at once," said Marguerite, "for we have nothing left."

M. de Solis bought up the bills and gave them to Marguerite. Balthazar came down to dinner a few minutes earlier than usual. For the first time in two years his daughter saw traces of emotion on his face, and his distress was painful to see. He was once more a father; reason had put science to flight. He gave a glance into the courtyard, and then into the garden; and when he was sure that they were alone, he turned to his daughter with sadness and kindness in his face.

"Dear child," he said, taking her hand and pressing it with earnest tenderness, "forgive your old father. Yes, Marguerite, I was in the wrong, and you were altogether right. I have not discovered the Secret, so there is no excuse for me. I will go away from here. I cannot look on and see Van Claes sold," he went on, and his eyes turned to the martyr's portrait. "He died for the cause of freedom, and I shall die for science; he is revered, I am hated——"

"Hated, father? Oh! no," she cried, throwing her arms about him; "we all adore you, do we not, Félicie?" she asked of her sister, who came into the room at that moment.

"What is it, father dear?" asked the little girl, slipping her hand into his.

"I have ruined you all. . . ."

"Eh!" cried Félicie, "the boys will make a fortune for us. Jean is always at the head of his class."

"Wait a moment, dear father," Marguerite added, and with

a charming caressing gesture the daughter led her father to the chimneypiece, and drew several papers from beneath the clock; "here are your drafts, but you must not sign your name to any more bills, for there will be nothing left to pay them with another time——"

"Then you have some money?" Balthazar said in his daughter's ear, as soon as he had recovered from his surprise; and with all her heroism, Marguerite's heart sank at the words. There was such frenzy of joy, and hope, and expectation in her father's face: his eyes were wandering round the room as if in search of the money.

"Yes, father," she said sadly, "I have my fortune."

"Give it to me!" he cried, with an eagerness which he could not control; "I will give you back an hundred-fold."

"Yes, I will give it to you," said Marguerite, looking at her father, who did not understand the meaning that lay beneath his daughter's words.

"Ah! my dear child," he said, "you have saved my life! I had thought out a final experiment, the one thing that remains to be tried. If I do not succeed this time, I must renounce the Quest of the Absolute altogether. Come here, darling, give me your arm; if I can compass it, you shall be the happiest woman in the world; you have given me fresh hopes of happiness and fame; you have given me power; I will heap riches upon you, and wealth, and jewels."

He clasped both her hands in his and kissed her forehead, giving expression to his joy in caresses that seemed almost like abject gratitude to Marguerite. Balthazar had no eyes for any one else during the dinner; he watched her with something like a lover's fondness and alert attention; she could not move but he tried to read her thoughts and to guess her wishes, and waited on her with an assiduity which embarrassed her; there was a youthfulness in his manner which contrasted strangely with his premature old age. But in reply to his caresses and attentions, Marguerite could only draw his attention to their present distress, either by giving expression to her doubts, or by a glance at the empty tiers of shelves along the walls.

"Pshaw!" he said, "in six months' time we will fill them with gold plate and wonders. You shall live like a queen in state. All the earth will be under our feet; everything will be ours. And all through you, my Marguerite. . . . Margarita!" he mused smilingly, "the name was prophetic. Marguerite means a pearl. Sterne said that somewhere or other. Have you read Sterne? Would you care to read Sterne? It would amuse you."

"They say that pearls are the result of some disease," she said bitterly, "and we have already suffered much."

"Do not be sad; you will make the fortune of those you love; you will be rich and great——"

"Mademoiselle has such a good heart," said Lemulquinier, and his colander countenance was distorted by a smile.

The rest of the evening Balthazar spent with his daughters, and for them exerted all his powers of conversation and the charm of his personality. There was something magnetic in his looks and tones, a fascination like that of the serpent; the genius and the kindly wit that had attracted Josephine were called into play; he seemed, as it were, to take his daughters to his heart. When Emmanuel de Solis came, he found a family group; the father and children were talking as they had not done for a long time. In spite of himself, the young headmaster fell under the spell of the scene; it was impossible to resist Balthazar's manner, de Solis was carried away by it. Men of science, however deeply absorbed in watching quite other phenomena, bring highly trained powers of perception to the least details of daily life. Nothing escapes their observation in their own sphere; they are not oblivious, but they keep to their own times and seasons, and are seldom in touch with the world that lies beyond that sphere; they know everything, and forthwith forget it all; they make forecasts of the future for their own sole benefit, foresee the events that take others by surprise, and keep their own counsel. If, while to all appearance they are unconscious of what is passing, they make use of their special gift of observation and deduction, they see and understand, and

draw their own inferences, and there is an end of it; work claims them again, and they seldom make any but a blundering use of their knowledge of the things of life. At times when they are roused from their social apathy, or if they happen to drop from the world of ideas to the world of men and women, they bring with them a well-stored memory, and are by no means strangers to what is happening there. So it was with Balthazar. He had quick sympathies as well as keen-sightedness, and knew the whole of his daughter's life; he had guessed or learned in some way the almost imperceptible events of the course of the mysterious love that bound her to Emmanuel; he let the lovers feel that he had guessed their secret, and sanctioned their affection by sharing in it. From Marguerite's father this was the sweetest form of flattery, and they could not resist it. The evening thus spent was delightful after the troubled and anxious life the poor girls had led of late. When Balthazar at last left them, after they had basked, as it were, for awhile in the sunlight of his presence, and bathed in his tenderness, Emmanuel de Solis' constrained manner changed; he emptied his pockets of three thousand ducats, of which he had been uneasily conscious. He set them down on Marguerite's work-table, and she covered them with some house-linen which she was mending. Then he went back for the remainder. When he returned, Félicie had gone to bed. It was past eleven o'clock, and Martha, who was sitting up for her mistress, was still busy in Félicie's room.

"Where shall I hide it?" asked Marguerite; she could not resist the temptation of passing the coins through here fingers, a childish freak, a moment's delay, which cost her dear!

"Those pedestals are hollow," said Emmanuel; "I will raise the column off its base, and we will slip the gold inside it: no one would think of looking there for it."

But just as Marguerite was making the last journey but one between the work-table and the pedestal, she gave a shrill cry and let the piles of ducats fall, the paper in which they were wrapped gave way, and the gold coins rolled in all

directions over the floor; her father was standing in the doorway: his eager look terrified her.

"What ever are you doing?" he asked, looking from his daughter, who stood transfixed with terror, to the startled de Solis, who had hastily risen to his feet—too late, his kneeling position at the foot of the pedestal had been sufficient to betray him.

The din of the falling gold rang hideously in their ears; the coins lay scattered abroad on the floor, a sinister augury of the future.

"I thought so," said Balthazar; "I felt sure that I heard the rattle of gold . . ."

He was almost as excited as the other two; one thought possessed them both, and made their hearts beat so violently that the sounds could be heard in the great silence which suddenly fell in the parlor.

"Thank you, M. de Solis," said Marguerite, with a glance of intelligence, which said: "Play your part; help me to save the money."

"What!" cried Balthazar, with a clairvoyant glance at his daughter and Emmanuel, "then this gold——?"

"Belongs to this gentleman, who has been so good as to lend it to me that we may fulfil our engagements," she answered.

M. de Solis reddened, and turned as if to go.

"Monsieur," said Balthazar, laying a hand on his arm, "do not slip away from my grateful thanks."

"You owe me no thanks, M. Claes. The money belongs to Mlle. Marguerite; she has borrowed it of me on security," he answered, looking at Marguerite, who thanked him by an almost imperceptible movement of her eyelids.

"I cannot allow that," said Claes, taking up a pen and a sheet of paper from the table where Félicie had been writing. He turned to the two bewildered young people.

"How much is there?" he asked.

Balthazar's ruling passion had made him craftier than the most cunning of deliberate scoundrels; he meant to have

the money in his own hands. Marguerite and Emmanuel de Solis hesitated.

"Let us count it," said Balthazar.

"There are six thousand ducats," Emmanuel said.

"Seventy thousand francs," returned Claes.

Marguerite and Emmanuel exchanged glances, and Emmanuel took courage.

"M. Claes," he said respectfully, "your note of hand is worth nothing—pardon the technical expression. This morning I lent mademoiselle a hundred thousand francs to buy up the bills which you were unable to meet, so evidently you are not in a position to give me any security. This money belongs to your daughter, who can dispose of it as seems good to her; but I have only lent it with the understanding that she will sign a document giving me a claim on her share of the land at Waignies, on which the forest once stood."

Marguerite turned her head away to hide the tears that filled her eyes. She knew Emmanuel's purity of heart. He had been brought up by his uncle in the most scrupulous practice of the virtues prescribed by religion; she knew that he held lies in special abhorrence; he had laid his life and his heart at her feet, and now he was sacrificing his conscience for her.

"Good-night, M. de Solis," said Balthazar; "I had not looked for suspicion in one whom I regard almost with a father's eyes."

Emmanuel gave Marguerite a piteous glance, and then crossed the courtyard with Martha, who closed and bolted the house door after the visitor had gone.

As soon as the father and daughter were alone together, Claes said:

"You love him, do you not?"

"Father, let us go straight to the point," she said. "You want this money? You shall never have any of it," and she began to gather up the scattered ducats, her father helping her in silence. Together they counted it over, Marguerite

showing not a trace of distrust. When the gold was once more arranged in piles, Claes spoke in the tone of a desperate man:

"Marguerite, I must have the gold!"

"If you take it from me, it will be theft," she said coolly. "Listen to me, father; it would be far kinder to kill us outright than to make us daily endure a thousand deaths. You see, one of us must give way——"

"So you would murder your father," he said.

"We shall have avenged our mother's death," she said, pointing to the spot where Mme. Claes had died.

"My child, if you only knew what is at stake, you would not say such things as these to me. Listen! I will explain what the problem is. . . . But you would not understand!" he cried in despair. "After all, give it to me; believe in your father for once. . . . Yes, I know that I gave your mother pain; I know that I have squandered (for that is how ignorant people put it) my own fortune and made great inroads into yours; I know that you are all working for what you call madness . . . but, my angel, my darling, my love, my Marguerite, just listen to me! If I do not succeed this time, I will put myself in your hands; all that you desire I will do; I will give to you the obedience that you owe to me; I will do your bidding, and administer my affairs as you shall direct; I will be my children's guardian no longer; I will lay down my authority. I swear it by your mother!" he said, shedding tears as he spoke.

Marguerite turned her head away; she could not bear to see his tears; and Claes, thinking that this was a sign of yielding, flung himself on his knees before her.

"Marguerite! Marguerite! give me the gold! Give it to me to save yourself from eternal remorse. What are twenty thousand francs? You see, I shall die; this will kill me. . . . Listen to me, Marguerite! My promise shall be religiously kept. I will give up my experiments if I fail; I will go away; I will leave Flanders, and even France, if you wish it. I will begin again as a mechanic, and build up my

fortune *sou* by *sou,* so that my children may recover at last all that science will have taken from them."

Marguerite tried to persuade her father to rise, but he still knelt to her, and continued, with tears in his eyes:

"Be tender and devoted this once; it is the last time. If I do not succeed, I myself will acquiesce in your harsh judgment. You can call me a madman, a bad father; you can say that I am a fool, and I will kiss your hands; beat me if you will; I will bless you as the best of daughters, remembering that you have given me your very life-blood."

"Ah!" she cried, "if it were only my life-blood, you should have it; but how can I look on and see my brothers and sister murdered in cold blood for science? I cannot! Let it end!" she cried, drying her tears, and putting away her father's caressing hand from her.

"Seventy thousand francs and two months!" he said, rising in anger; "I want no more than that! and my daughter bars my way to fame, my daughter stands between wealth and me. My curse upon you!" he went on, after a moment's pause. "You have neither a daughter's nor a woman's heart! You will never be a wife nor a mother! . . . Let me have it! Say the word, my dear little one, my precious child. I will adore you!" and he stretched out his hands with horrible eagerness towards the gold.

"I cannot help myself if you take it by force, but God and the great Claes look down upon us now," said Marguerite, pointing to the portrait.

"Then live, if you can, when your father's blood will be on your head!" cried Balthazar, looking at her with abhorrence.

He rose, looked round the parlor, and slowly left it; when he reached the door, he turned and came back as a beggar might, with an imploring gesture, a look of entreaty, but Marguerite only shook her head in reply.

"Farewell, my daughter!" he said gently; "try to live happily."

When he had gone, Marguerite stood for awhile in dull

bewilderment; it seemed as if her whole world had slipped from her. She was no longer in the familiar parlor; she was no longer conscious of her physical existence; her soul had taken wings and soared to a world where thought annihilates time and space, where the veil drawn across the future is lifted by some divine power. It seemed to her that she lived through whole days between each sound of her father's footsteps on the staircase; and when she heard him moving above in his room, a cold shudder went through her. A sudden warning vision flashed like lightning through her brain; she fled noiselessly up the dark staircase with the speed of an arrow, and saw her father pointing a pistol at his head.

"Take it all!" she cried, as she sprang towards him.

She fell into a chair. At the sight of her white face, Balthazar began to weep—such tears as old men shed; he was like a child; he kissed her forehead, speaking incoherent, meaningless words; he almost danced for joy, and tried to play with her as a lover plays with the mistress who has made him happy.

"Enough of this, father!" she said; "remember your promise! If you do not succeed, will you obey my wishes?"

"Yes."

"Oh, mother!" she cried, turning to the door of Mme. Claes' room, "you would have given it all to him, would you not?"

"Sleep in peace," said Balthazar; "you are a good girl."

"Sleep!" she cried; "the nights that brought sleep are gone with my youth. You have made me old, father, just as you gradually blighted my mother's life."

"Poor little one! If I could only give you confidence, by explaining the results I hope to obtain from a grand experiment that I have just planned, you would see then——"

"I see nothing but our ruin," she said, rising to go.

The next day was a holiday at the Collège de Douai. Emmanuel de Solis came with Jean to see them.

"Well?" he asked anxiously, as he went up to Marguerite.

"I gave way," she said.

"My dear life," he answered, half sorrowfully, half gladly, "if you had not yielded, I should have admired you, but I adore you for your weakness."

"Poor, poor Emmanuel! what remains for us?"

"Leave everything to me," he cried, with a radiant glance. "We love each other; it will be well with us."

Several months went by in unbroken peace. M. de Solis made Marguerite see that her retrenchments and petty economies were absolutely useless, and advised her to live comfortably, and to use the remainder of the money which Mme. Claes had deposited with him for the expenses of the household. All through those months Marguerite was harassed by the anxiety which had proved too heavy a burden for her mother; for, little as she was disposed to believe in her father's promises, she was driven to hope in his genius. It is a strange and inexplicable thing that we so often continue to hope when we have no faith left. Hope is the flower of Desire, and Faith is the fruit of Certainty.

"*If* my father succeeds, we shall be happy," Marguerite told herself; Claes and Lemulquinier said, "We shall succeed!" but Claes and Lemulquinier were alone in their belief. Unluckily, Balthazar grew more and more depressed day by day. Sometimes he did not dare to meet his daughter's eyes at dinner; sometimes, on the other hand, he looked at her in triumph. Marguerite spent her evenings in seeking explanations of legal difficulties, with young de Solis as her tutor; she was always asking her father about their complicated family relationships. At last her masculine education was complete; she was ready with plans to put into execution if her father should once more be worsted in the duel with his antagonist—the Unknown X.

About the beginning of July, Balthazar spent a whole day on a bench in the garden, absorbed in sad thoughts. Once and again he looked about him, at the bare garden beds, which had once been gay with tulips, at the windows of his wife's room, and shuddered, doubtless at the recollection of all that this Quest had cost him. He stirred from time to

time, and it was plain that he thought of other things than science. Just before dinner, Marguerite took up her needlework, and came out to sit beside him for a few minutes.

"Well, father, you have not succeeded?"

"No, my child."

"Ah!" Marguerite said gently, "I am not going to utter a word of reproach; indeed, we are both equally to blame; but I must claim the fulfilment of your promise; your promise is surely sacred—you are a Claes. Your children will never show you anything but love and respect; but from today you are in my hands, and must do as I wish. Do not be anxious; my rule will be mild, and I will do my best to bring it quickly to an end. I am going to leave you for a month—Martha is going with me—so that I may see after your affairs," she added, with a kiss, "for you are my child now, you know. So Félicie will be left in charge. Poor child! she is barely seventeen; how can she resist you? Be generous, and do not ask her for a penny, for she has nothing beyond what is strictly necessary for the housekeeping expenses. Take courage; give up your investigations and your theories for two or three years, you ideas will mature, and by that time I shall have saved the necessary money, and the problem shall be solved. Now, then, tell me, is not your queen a merciful sovereign?"

"So all is not yet lost!" the old man answered.

"No, if you will only keep your word."

"I will obey you, Marguerite," said Claes, deeply moved.

Next morning M. Conyncks came from Cambrai for his grand-niece. He had come in his traveling carriage, and only stayed in his cousin's house until Marguerite and Martha could complete the preparations for their journey. M. Claes made his cousin welcome, but he was evidently downcast and humiliated. Old M. Conyncks guessed Balthazar's thoughts; and as they sat at breakfast, he said, with clumsy frankness:

"I have a few of your pictures, cousin; I have a liking for a good picture; it is a ruinous mania, but we all have our weaknesses——"

"Dear uncle!" remonstrated Marguerite.

"They say you are ruined, cousin; but a Claes always has treasures here," he said, tapping his forehead, "and here too, has he not?" he added, laying his hand on his heart. "I believe in you, moreover, and having a few spare crowns in my purse, I am using them in your service."

"Ah!" cried Balthazar, "I will repay you with treasures."

"The only treasures we have in Flanders, cousin, are patience and hard work," said Conyncks sternly. "Our ancestor there has the two words graven on his forehead," he added, as he pointed to the portrait of Van Claes.

Marguerite kissed her father and bade him good-bye, gave her last parting directions to Josette and Félicie, and set out for Paris with her great-uncle. He was a widower with one daughter, a girl of twelve, and the owner of an immense fortune; it was not impossible that he might think of marrying again, and the good people of Douai believed that Marguerite was destined to be his second wife. Rumors of this great match for Marguerite reached Pierquin's ears, and brought him back to the Maison Claes. Considerable changes had been wrought in the views of that wide-awake worthy.

Society in Douai had been divided for the past two years into two hostile camps. The noblesse formed one group, and the bourgeoisie the other; and, not unnaturally, the latter cordially hated the former. This sharp division, in fact, was not confined to Douai; it suddenly split France into two rival nations, small jealous squabbles assumed serious proportions, and contributed not a little to the widespread acceptance of the Revolution of July 1830. There was a third party occupying an intermediate position between the ultra-Monarchical and ultra-Liberal camps, to wit, the officials who belonged socially to one or other circle, but who, on the downfall of the Bourbons from power, immediately became neutral. At the outset of the struggle between the noblesse and the bourgeoisie the most unheard-of splendor was displayed at coffee-parties. The Royalists made such brilliantly successful efforts to eclipse their Liberal rivals that these

epicurean festivities were said to have cost some enthusiastic politicians their lives; like ill-cast cannon, they could not stand such practice. Naturally the two circles became more and more restricted and fanatical.

Pierquin, though a very wealthy man as provincial fortunes go, found himself excluded from the aristocratic circle and driven back upon the bourgeoisie. His self-love had suffered considerably in the process; he had received rebuff upon rebuff; gradually the men with whom he had formerly rubbed shoulders dropped his acquaintance. He was forty years of age, the limit of time when a man who contemplates marriage can think of taking a young wife. The matches to which he might aspire were among the bourgeoisie, but his ambition looked longingly back towards the aristocratic world from which he had been thrust, and he cast about for a creditable alliance which should reinstate him there. The Claes family lived so much out of the world that they knew nothing of all these social changes. Claes, indeed, belonged by birth to the old aristocracy of the province, but it seemed not at all likely that, absorbed as he was by scientific interests, he would share in the recently introduced class prejudices. However poor she might be, a daughter of the house of Claes would bring with her the dower of gratified vanity, which is eagerly coveted by all parvenus.

Pierquin, therefore, renewed his visits to the Maison Claes. He had made up his mind to this marriage, and to attain his social ambitions at all costs. He bestowed his company on Balthazar and Félicie in Marguerite's absence, and discovered, rather late in the day, that he had a formidable rival in Emmanuel de Solis. Emmanuel's late uncle the Abbé had left his nephew no inconsiderable amount of property, it was said; and in the eyes of the notary, who looked at everything from an undisguisedly material standpoint, Emmanuel in the character of his uncle's heir was a rival to be dreaded: Pierquin was more disquieted by Emmanuel's money than by his attractive personality. Wealth restored all its lustre to the name of de Solis. Gold and noble birth were twin glories

that reflected splendor upon each other. The notary saw that the young headmaster treated Félicie as a sister, and he became jealous of this sincere affection. He tried to eclipse Emmanuel, mingling conventional phrases of gallantry with the small talk of the day, and the airs of a man of fashion with the dreamy, pensive melancholy which was not ill-suited to his face. He had lost all his illusions, he said, and turned his eyes on Félicie as if to let her know that she, and she alone, could reconcile him with life. And Félicie, to whom compliments and flattery were a novelty, listened to the language which is always sweet to hear, even when it is insincere; she mistook his emptiness for depth; she had nothing to occupy her mind, and her cousin became the object of the vague sentiments that filled her heart. Possibly, though she herself was not conscious of the fact, she was jealous of the attentions which Emmanuel showed her sister, and she wished to be likewise some man's first thought. Pierquin soon saw that Félicie showed more attention to him than to Emmanuel, and this encouraged him to persist in his attempt, until he went further than he had intended. Emmanuel looked on, watching the beginning of this passion, simulated in the lawyer, artlessly sincere in Félicie, whose future was at stake. Whispered phrases were exchanged between the cousins when Emmanuel's back was turned, little colloquies, trifling deceptions, which gave to the stolen words and glances a treacherous sweetness that might give rise to innocent errors.

Pierquin hoped and intended to turn his intimacy with Félicie to his own account, and to discover Marguerite's reasons for taking the journey to Paris; he wanted to know whether there was any question of her marriage, and whether he must renounce his pretensions; but, in spite of his transparent manœuvres, neither Balthazar nor Félicie could throw any light on the subject, for the very sufficient reason that they themselves knew nothing of Marguerite's plans; on her accession to power she seemed to have adopted the maxims of statecraft, and had kept her own counsel.

Balthazar's brooding melancholy and depression made the evenings tedious. Emmanuel had succeeded in persuading him to play at backgammon, but Balthazar's thoughts were elsewhere all the while; and, as a rule, the great chemist, with all his intellectual powers, seemed positively stupid. His expectations had come to nothing; his humiliation was great; he had squandered three fortunes; he was a penniless gambler; he was crushed beneath the ruins of his house, beneath the burden of hopes that were disappointed but not extinct. The man of genius, curbed by necessity, acquiescing in his own condemnation, was a tragic spectacle which would have touched the most unfeeling nature. Pierquin himself could not but feel an involuntary respect for this caged lion with the look of baffled power in the eyes which were calm by reason of despair, and faded from excess of light; there was a mute entreaty for charity in them which the lips did not dare to frame. Sometimes his face suddenly lighted up as he devised a new experiment; and then Balthazar's eyes would travel round the room to the spot where his wife had died, and tears like burning grains of sand would cross the arid pupils of his eyes, grown over-large with thought, and his head would drop on his breast. He had lifted the world like a Titan, and the world had rolled back heavily on his breast. This giant sorrow, controlled so manfully, had its effect on Pierquin and Emmanuel, who at times felt so much moved by it that they were ready to offer him a sum of money sufficient for another series of experiments—so infectious are the convictions of genius! Both young men began to understand how Mme. Claes and Marguerite could have flung millions into the abyss; but reflection checked the impulses of their hearts, and their goodwill manifested itself in attempts at consolation which increased the anguish of the fallen and stricken Titan.

Claes never mentioned his oldest daughter, showed no uneasiness at her prolonged absence, and did not appear to notice her silence, for she wrote neither to him nor to Félicie. He seemed to be displeased if Solis or Pierquin

asked him for news of her. Did he suspect that Marguerite was plotting against him? Did he feel himself lowered in his own eyes now that he had abdicated and made over his rights as a father to his child? Had he come to love her less because they had changed places? Perhaps all these things counted for something, and mingled with other and vaguer feelings which overclouded his soul; he chose to say nothing of Marguerite, as though she were in some sort in disgrace.

Great men, however great, known or unknown, lucky or unlucky in their endeavors, are still human, and have their weaknesses. Unluckily, too, they are condemned to suffer doubly, for their qualities as well as for their defects; and perhaps Balthazar was as yet unused to the pangs of a wounded vanity. The days, the evenings which all four spent together, were full of melancholy, and overshadowed by vague, uneasy apprehensions, while Marguerite was away. They were days like a barren waste; they were not utterly without consolations, a few flowers bloomed here and there for them to pluck, but the house seemed to be shrouded in gloom in the absence of the oldest daughter, who had come to be its life and hope and strength. In this way two months went by, and Balthazar patiently awaited his daughter's return.

Marguerite came back to Douai with her uncle, who did not immediately return to Cambrai. Doubtless he meant to give support to his niece in an impending crisis. Marguerite's return was the occasion of a small family rejoicing. The notary and M. de Solis had been invited to dinner by Félicie and Balthazar; and when the traveling carriage stopped before the door of the house, all four appeared to receive the travelers with great demonstrations of joy. Marguerite seemed glad to be at home in her father's house again; tears filled her eyes as she crossed the courtyard and went to the parlor. As she put her arms round her father's neck, other thoughts had mingled with the girl's kiss, and she blushed like a guilty wife who cannot dissemble; but when she saw Emmanuel, the troubled look died out of her

eyes, the sight of him seemed to give her courage for the task she had secretly set herself. In spite of the cheerfulness on every face and the gaiety of the talk at dinner, father and daughter studied each other with distrust and curiosity. Balthazar did not ask Marguerite a single question as to her stay in Paris, paternal dignity doubtless prevented him; Emmanuel de Solis was equally discreet; but Pierquin, who had so long been acquainted with all the secrets of the family, did not avoid the subject, and concealed his inquisitiveness under an assumption of geniality.

"Well, dear cousin," he said, "did you see Paris, and the theatres——?"

"I saw nothing of Paris," she answered; "I only went out when I was obliged to go. The days went by very tediously for me; I was longing to see Douai again."

"If I had not made a fuss, she would not have gone to the opera; and when she did, she found it tiresome!" said M. Conyncks.

None of them felt at their ease that evening, the smiles were constrained, a painful anxiety lurked beneath the forced gaiety; it was a trying occasion. Marguerite and Balthazar were both tortured by doubts and fears, and the others seemed to feel this. As the evening went on the faces of the father and daughter betrayed their agitation more plainly; and though Marguerite did her best to smile, her nervous movements, her glances, the tones of her voice betrayed her. M. Conyncks and Emmanuel de Solis seemed to understand the noble girl's agitation, and to bid her take courage by expressive glances; and Balthazar, hurt at not being taken into confidence while steps were taken and matters decided which concerned him, gradually became more and more reserved, and at last sat silent among his children and friends. Shortly, no doubt, Marguerite would inform him of her decisions. For a great man and a father the situation was intolerable.

Balthazar had reached the time of life when things are usually freely discussed with the children of the family,

when capacity for feeling is increased by wider experience of life; his face grew graver, more thoughtful and troubled as the time of his extinction as a citizen drew nearer.

A crisis in the family life was impending, a crisis of which some idea can only be given by a metaphor. The clouds that bore a thunderbolt in their midst had gathered and darkened the sky, while they laughed below in the fields; every one felt the heat and the coming storm, looked up at the heavens, and hurried on his way.

M. Conyncks was the first to go, Balthazar went with him to his room, and Pierquin and Emmanuel took their leave in his absence. Marguerite bade the notary a friendly good-night; she said nothing to Emmanuel, but she clasped his hand tightly, and the tears stood in her eyes as she looked at him. She sent Félicie away, and when Claes came back to the parlor she was sitting there alone.

"My kind father," she said in a tremulous voice, "I could not have brought myself to leave home but for the gravity of our position; but now, after agonies of hope and fear, and in spite of unheard-of difficulties, I have brought back with me some chance of salvation for us all. Thanks partly to your name, partly to our uncle's influence, and the interest of M. de Solis, we have obtained the post of Receiver of Taxes in Brittany for you; it is worth eighteen to twenty thousand francs a year, they say. Our uncle has undertaken to be security for you. Here is your appointment," she added, drawing a paper from her reticule. "For the next few years we must retrench and be content with bare necessaries; you would find it intolerable to live on here in the house; our father ought at least to live as he has always been accustomed to live. I shall not ask you to spare any of your income for us; you will spend it as seems good to you. But I entreat you to remember that we have no income, not a penny except from the amount invested in the funds for Gabriel—he always sends the interest to us. We will live as if the house were a convent; no one in the town shall hear anything about our economies. If you lived on here in

Douai, you would be a positive hindrance to us in our efforts to restore comfort. Am I abusing the authority you gave to me when I put you in a position to re-establish your fortune yourself? In a few years' time, if you choose, you will be Receiver-General."

"So, Marguerite," Balthazar said in a low voice, "you are driving me out of my house——"

"I did not deserve such a bitter reproach," said Marguerite, controlling the emotions that surged up in her heart. "You will come back again among us as soon as you can live in your native town in a manner befitting your name. Besides, did you not give me your promise, father?" she went on coldly. "You must do what I ask of you. Our uncle is waiting to go with you to Brittany, so that you may not have to travel alone."

"I shall not go!" cried Balthazar, rising to his feet; "I stand in need of no one's assistance to re-establish my fortune and to pay all that is owing to my children."

"You had better go," said Marguerite, with no sign of agitation in her manner. "I ask you simply to think over our respective positions. I can put the case before you in a very few words; if you stay in the house, your children will go out of it, that you may be the master."

"Marguerite!" cried Balthazar.

"And the next thing to do," she went on, without heeding her father's anger, "will be to inform the minister of your refusal to accept a lucrative and honorable post. We should never have obtained it, in spite of interest and influence, if our uncle had not adroitly slipped several notes for a thousand francs into a certain lady's glove——"

"All of you will leave me!"

"Yes. If you do not leave us, we must leave you," she answered "If I were your only child, I would follow my mother's example; I would not murmur at my fate, whatever you might bring upon me. But my brothers and sister shall not die of hunger and despair under your eyes; I promised this to her who died there," she said, pointing to her mother's

bed. "We have hidden our troubles from you, and endured them in silence, but our strength fails us now. We are not on the brink of a precipice; we are in its lowest depths, father! And if we are to extricate ourselves, we want something besides courage; all our efforts must not be continually thwarted by the freaks of a passion——"

"My dear children!" cried Balthazar, seizing Marguerite's hand, "I will help you; I will work with you; I——"

"This is the way," she answered, holding out the minister's letter.

"But, my darling, it would take too long to restore my fortune in this way that you are pointing out to me. The results of ten years of work will be lost, as well as the enormous sums of money which the laboratory represents. Our resources are up there," he said, indicating the garret.

Marguerite went towards the door, saying, "Choose for yourself, father!"

"Ah! my daughter, you are very hard!" he answered, as he sat down in an armchair; but he let her go.

Next morning Marguerite learned from Lemulquinier that M. Claes had gone out. She turned pale at this simple announcement, and her face spoke so eloquently of cruel anxiety, that the old servant said, "Do not alarm yourself, mademoiselle; the master said he would come back again at eleven o'clock for breakfast. He never went to bed at all last night. At two o'clock this morning he was standing by one of the windows in the parlor looking out at the roof of the laboratory. I was sitting up, waiting in the kitchen; I saw him, he was crying, he is in trouble; and here is the famous month of July again, when the sun has power enough to make us all rich, and if you only——"

"That is enough!" said Marguerite. She knew now what the thoughts were that had harassed her father.

As a matter of fact, it had come to pass with Balthazar, as with all homekeeping people, that his life was inseparable, as it were, from the places which had become a part of it. His thoughts were wedded to his house and laboratory; he

did not know how to do without the familiar surroundings; he was like a speculator, who is at a loss to know what to do with himself on public holidays when he cannot go on 'Change. All his hopes dwelt there in his laboratory; it was the one spot under heaven where he could breathe vital air. This clinging to familiar things and places, so strong an instinct in weak natures, becomes almost tyrannous in men of science and learning. Balthazar Claes was to leave his house; for him this meant that he must renounce his science and his problem, or in other words, that he must die.

Marguerite was in the last extremity of anxiety and fear until breakfast time. The thought of Balthazar's attempt to take his life after a similar scene came to her memory, and she feared that her father had found a tragic solution of his difficulties; she walked up and down in the parlor, and shuddered every time the bell rang at the door. Balthazar at last came back. Marguerite watched him cross the court, and, gazing anxiously at his face, could read nothing but the traces of all that storm of grief in its expression. When he came into the parlor she went up to him to wish him good-morning; he put his arms affectionately about her waist, drew her to his breast, kissed her forehead, and said in her ear:

"I have been to see about my passport."

The tones of her father's voice, his resignation, his caress almost broke poor Marguerite's heart; she turned her head away to hide the tears which she could not keep back, fled into the garden, and only came back when she had wept at her ease. During breakfast Balthazar was in great spirits, like a man who has decided on his course.

"So we are to start for Brittany, uncle, are we?" he said to M. Conyncks. "I have always thought I should like to see Brittany."

"Living is cheap there," the old uncle remarked.

"Is father going to leave us?" cried Félicie.

M. de Solis came in with Jean at that moment.

"You will let him spend the day with us," said Balthazar,

as Jean came to sit beside him; "I am going away to-morrow, and I want to bid him good-bye."

Emmanuel looked across at Marguerite, who hung her head. It was a melancholy day; every one felt sad; every one tried not to give way to painful thoughts or to tears. This was no ordinary parting; it was an exile. And then, every one instinctively felt how humiliating it was for a father thus to proclaim his losses by leaving his family and accepting the post of a paid official at Balthazar's time of life; but he was as magnanimous as Marguerite was firm, and submitted with dignity to the penance imposed on him for the errors which he had committed when carried away by his genius. When the evening was over, and the father and daughter were alone, Balthazar held out his hand to Marguerite. He had been as gentle and affectionate all through the day as in the happiest days of the past; and with a strange tenderness, in which despair was mingled, he asked, "Are you satisfied with your father?"

"You are worthy of *him!*" answered Marguerite, turning to the portrait of Van Claes.

Next morning Balthazar, followed by Lemulquinier, went into his laboratory to take leave of his cherished hopes. Master and man exchanged melancholy glances as they stood on the threshold of the garret. Everything was in working order, as though those hopes had not yet perished, and they were about to leave it all, perhaps for ever. Balthazar looked round at the apparatus about which his thoughts had hovered for so long; there was nothing there but had its associations for him, and had borne a part in his experiments or his investigations. Dejectedly he bade Lemulquinier set free the gases, evaporate the more noxious acids, and take precautions against possible explosions. As he saw to all these details, bitter regrets broke from him, as from a man condemned to death when they are about to lead him to the scaffold.

"Just look!" he said, stopping before a capsule in which the two wires of a voltaic battery were immersed; "we ought to wait to see the result of this experiment. If it were to suc-

ceed my children would not drive their father from his house when he could fling diamonds at their feet. Hideous thought! . . . Here is a combination of carbon and sulphur, in which the carbon plays the part of an electro-positive body; crystallization should commence at the negative pole, and in the case of decomposition the carbon would be deposited there in a crystalline form."

"Ah! that is what it will do!" said Lemulquinier, looking admiringly at his master.

"But," Balthazar went on after a moment of silence, "the combination is submitted to the influence of that battery which might act——"

"If monsieur desires it, I will soon increase——"

"No, no; it must be left just as it is. That sort of crystallization requires time, and must be left undisturbed."

"Confound it! the crystallization is long enough about it!" cried the man-servant.

"If the temperature were to fall, the sulphide of carbon would crystallize," said Balthazar, letting fall stray links of a chain of ideas which was complete in his own mind; "but suppose the action of the battery is brought to bear on it under certain conditions which I do not know how to set up. . . . This ought to be carefully watched . . . it is possible. . . . But what am I thinking of? There is to be no more chemistry for us, my friend; we must keep books in a receiver's office somewhere in Brittany. . . ."

Claes hurried away and went downstairs to breakfast in his own house for the last time. Pierquin and M. de Solis had joined them. Balthazar was anxious to put an end to the death-agony of science, said farewell to his children, and stepped into the carriage after his uncle; all the family came with him to the threshold of the door. There, as Marguerite clung to her father in despair, he answered her mute appeal, saying in her ear, "You are a good child; I bear you no ill-will, Marguerite."

Marguerite crossed the courtyard, and took refuge in the parlor; kneeling on the spot where her mother died, she made

a fervent prayer to God to give her strength to bring the heavy task of her new life to a successful end. She felt stronger already, for an inner voice echoed the applause of angels through her heart, and with it mingled the thanks of her mother, her sister, and brothers. Emmanuel and Pierquin came in; they had watched the traveling carriage till it was out of sight.

"Now, mademoiselle, what will you do next?" inquired Pierquin.

"Save the family," she said simply. "We have about thirteen hundred acres of land at Waignies. I mean to have it cleared, and to divide it up into three farms, to erect the necessary farm buildings, and then to let them. I feel sure that in a few years' time, with plenty of patience and prudence, each of us three," she said, turning to her brother and sister, "will possess a farm of about four hundred acres, which some day or other will bring in fifteen thousand francs yearly. My brother Gabriel's share must be this house and the consols that stand in his name. Then we will pay off our father's debts by degrees, and give him back his estates when the time comes."

"But, dear cousin," said Pierquin, amazed at Marguerite's clear-headedness and calm summing-up of the situation, "you will want more than two hundred thousand francs if you are going to clear the land and build steadings and buy cattle. Where is the money to come from?"

"That is just where the difficulty comes in," she said, looking from the lawyer to Emmanuel de Solis; "I cannot venture to ask any more of my uncle; he has already become security for our father."

"You have friends!" cried Pierquin. It suddenly struck him that even yet the Claes girls were worth more than five hundred thousand francs apiece.

Emmanuel looked at Marguerite tenderly; but Pierquin, unluckily for him, was still a notary in the midst of his enthusiasm. He answered accordingly, "I can let you have the two hundred thousand francs!"

Emmanuel and Marguerite sought counsel of each other by a glance, a glance that sent a ray of light through Pierquin's brain. Félicie blushed up to the eyes; she was so glad that her cousin had proved as generous as she had wished. Marguerite looked at her sister, and guessed the truth at once; during her absence the poor child's heart had been won by Pierquin's meaningless gallantry.

"You shall only pay me five per cent," he added, "and repay me when you like; you can give me a mortgage on your farms. But do not trouble yourself about it; you shall have nothing to do but to pay the money when all the contracts are completed; I will find you some good tenants, and look after everything for you. I will do it all for nothing, and stand by you like a trusty kinsman."

Emmanuel made a sign to Marguerite, beseeching her to refuse this offer, but she was too much absorbed in watching the shades of expression that crossed her sister's face to notice him. After a moment's silence she turned to the lawyer with an ironical glance, and answered of her own accord, to M. de Solis' great joy.

"You have stood by us, cousin," she said; "I should have expected no less of you; but we want to free the estates as quickly as possible, and the five per cent interest would hamper us; I shall wait till my brother comes of age, and we will sell his stock."

Pierquin bit his lips, Emmanuel began to smile gently.

"Félicie, dear child, take Jean back to school," said Marguerite, glancing at her brother. "Take Martha with you. Be very good, Jean, my darling, and do not tear your clothes; we are not rich enough now to buy new ones for you as often as we used to do. There, run away little man, and work hard at your lessons."

Félicie went out with her brother.

"Cousin," said Marguerite to Pierquin, "and you, monsieur," she added, turning to M. de Solis, "you have doubtless come to visit my father while I was away? I am grateful to you for this proof of your friendship, and I am sure that

you will do no less for two poor girls who will stand in need of your advice. Let us understand each other clearly. When I am in Douai I shall always see you with the greatest pleasure; but when Félicie will be left here with no one but Josette and Martha, I need not tell you that she can receive no visitors, not even an old friend and a cousin so devoted to our interests. In our position we must not give the slightest occasion for gossip. We must give our minds to our work for a long time to come and live in solitude."

For several moments no one spoke. Emmanuel, deeply absorbed in watching Marguerite's face, was dumb; Pierquin was at a loss what to say, and took leave of his cousin. He felt furious with himself; he suddenly perceived that Marguerite loved Emmanuel, and that he had acted like the veriest fool.

"Look here, Pierquin, my friend," said he to himself, as he went along the street, "any one who called you an ass would say nothing but truth. What a stupid dolt I am! I have twelve thousand livres a year besides my professional income, to say nothing of my uncle Des Raquets; all his money will come to me some of these days, and I shall have as much again then (after all, I don't want him to die, he is thrifty), and I was graceless enough to ask Mlle. Claes for interest! No! After all, Félicie is a sweet and good little thing, who will suit me better. Marguerite has a will like iron; she would want to rule me, and—she would rule me! Come, let us show ourselves generous, Pierquin, let us have less of the notary. I cannot shake off old habits. Bless me! I will fall in love with Félicie, those are my sentiments, and I mean to stick to them. Goodness, yes! She will have a farm of her own—four hundred and thirty acres of good land, for the soil at Waignies is rich, and before long it will bring in from fifteen to twenty thousand livres yearly. My uncle Des Raquets dies (poor old gentleman!), I sell my practice, and I am a man of leisure worth fifty thousand livres a year,—fif—ty thou—sand livres! My wife is a Claes; I am connected with several families of distinction.

Diantre! Then we shall see if Savaron de Savarus, the Courtevilles, and Magalhens will decline to visit a Pierquin-Claes-Molina-Nourho! I will be mayor of Douai; I shall have the Cross of the Legion of Honor; I can be a deputy, nothing will be beyond my reach. . . . So look out, Pierquin, my boy, and let us have no more nonsense, inasmuch as, upon my honor, Félicie—Mademoiselle Félicie Van Claes is in love with you."

When the two lovers were alone, Emmanuel held out his hand, and Marguerite could not help laying her right hand in his. The same impulse made them both rise to their feet, and turn to go towards their bench in the garden; but in the middle of the parlor her lover could not control his joy, and in a voice that trembled with emotion, he said to Marguerite:

"I have three hundred thousand francs that belong to you——"

"How is that?" she cried; "did my poor mother leave other sums for us in your keeping? . . . No? . . . Then how is this?"

"Oh! my Marguerite, what is mine is yours, is it not? Were you not the first to say *we?*"

"Dear Emmanuel!" she said, pressing the hand that she still held, and instead of going into the garden, she sat down in a low chair.

"It is I who should thank you," he said, with love in his voice, "since you accept it from me."

"Dear love," she said, "this moment atones for many sorrows, and brings us nearer to a happy future! Yes, I will accept your fortune," she continued, and an angelic smile hovered about her mouth; "I know of a way to make it mine."

She looked over at Van Claes' portrait, as if calling on her ancestor to be a witness. Emmanuel de Solis had followed the direction of her eyes; he did not see her draw a little ring from her finger; he did not notice that she had done so until he heard the words:

"Out of the depths of our sorrow one comfort has arisen; my father's indifference leaves me free to dispose of myself," she said, holding out the ring. "Take it, Emmanuel; my mother loved you, she would have chosen you."

Tears came to Emmanuel's eyes; he turned pale, fell on his knees, and said to Marguerite, as he gave her the ring that he always wore:

"Here is my mother's wedding ring. My Marguerite" (and he kissed the little golden hoop), "shall I have no pledge but this?"

She bent forward, and Emmanuel's lips touched her forehead.

"Alas! poor love, are we not doing wrong?" she said in a trembling voice. "We shall have to wait for a long while."

"My uncle used to say that adoration was the daily bread of patience; he spoke of the Christian's love of God; but in this way I can love you, Marguerite;—for a long while the thought of you has mingled with the thought of God so that I cannot separate them; I am yours, as I am His."

For a few moments they remained rapt in the sweetest ecstasy. Their feelings were poured out as quietly and naturally as a spring wells up and overflows in little waves that never cease. The fate which kept the two lovers apart was a source of melancholy, which gave to their happiness something of the poignancy of grief. Félicie came back again, all too soon for them. Emmanuel, taught by the charming tact of love, which instinctively divines everything, left the two sisters together, with a glance in which Marguerite could read how much this consideration cost him—a glance that told her how long and ardently he had desired this happiness which had just been consecrated by the betrothal of their hearts.

"Come here, little sister," said Marguerite, putting her arm round Félicie's neck. They went together out into the garden, and sat down on the bench to which one generation after another had confided their love and grief, their plans and musings. In spite of her sister's gay tones and shrewd, kindly

smile, Félicie felt something very like a tremor of fear. Marguerite took her hand, and felt that she was trembling.

"Mademoiselle Félicie," her older sister said in her ear, "I am reading your heart. Pierquin has been here very often while I was away; he came every evening, he has whispered sweet words, and you have listened to him."

Félicie blushed.

"Do not defend yourself, my angel," Marguerite answered; "it is so natural to love! Perhaps our cousin's character may alter under the influence of your dear soul; he is selfish, and thinks only of his own interests, but he is kind-hearted, and his very faults will no doubt conduce to your happiness, for he will love you as the fairest of his possessions, you will be a part of his business affairs. Forgive me for that word, darling! You will cure him of the bad habit of thinking of nothing but material interests by teaching him to occupy himself with the affairs of the heart."

Félicie could only put her arms round her sister.

"Besides," Marguerite went on, "he is well-to-do. He belongs to one of the most distinguished and oldest bourgeois families. And you cannot think that I would put obstacles in the way of your happiness, if you choose to find it in a sphere somewhat beneath you?"

"Dear sister!" broke from Félicie.

"Oh, yes; you may trust me!" cried Marguerite. "What more natural than that we should tell each other our secrets?"

These words, so heartily spoken, opened the way for one of those delightful talks in which young girls confide everything to each other. Love had made Marguerite quick to read her sister's heart, and she said at last to Félicie:

"Well, dear little one, we must make sure that the cousin really loves you, and then——"

"Leave it to me," said Félicie, laughing; "I have an example here before me."

"Little goose!" said Marguerite, kissing her forehead.

Pierquin belonged to the class of men who regard marriage as a business contract, a fulfilment of social duties, and a

way of transmitting property; it was to him a matter of indifference whether he married Marguerite or Félicie, so long as both bore the same family name and possessed the same amount of dower; yet he was quite acute enough to see that both of them, to use his own expression, were "romantic and sentimental girls," two adjectives employed by commonplace people to ridicule the gifts which nature sows with a grudging hand in the furrows of the human field. Doubtless the lawyer concluded that he had best do at Rome as the Romans do; for the next day he came to see Marguerite, and with a mysterious air took her out into the little garden and began to talk "sentiment," since this was a necessary preliminary, according to social usages, to the usual formal contract drawn up by a lawyer.

"Dear cousin," said he, "we have not always been of one mind as to the best means of bringing you out of your difficulties, but you must acknowledge that I have always been prompted by a strong desire to serve you. Well, then, yesterday my offer of help was completely spoiled by an unlucky trick of speaking, due simply to a lawyer's habit of mind. Do you understand? My heart is not to blame for the absurd piece of folly. I have cared very much about you, and we lawyers have a certain quick-sightedness; I saw that you did not like what I said. It is my own fault! Some one else has been cleverer than I was. Well, I have come to tell you out and out that I love your sister Félicie. So you can treat me as a brother, dip in my purse, take what you will; the more you take, the better you will prove your regard for me. I am wholly at your service, *without interest*—do you understand?—of any sort or description. If only I may be thought worthy of Félicie, that is all I ask. Forgive me for my mistakes, they are due to business habits; my heart is right enough, and I would throw myself into the Scarpe rather than not make my wife happy."

"This is very satisfactory, cousin; but the matter does not rest with me. it rests with my sister and father," said Marguerite.

"I know that, dear cousin," the notary answered, "but you are like a mother to them all; besides, I have nothing more nearly at heart than that you should judge of mine correctly."

This way of speaking was characteristic of the honest notary. Later in life, Pierquin's reply to an invitation from the commanding officer at Saint Omer became famous; the latter had asked him to some military festivity, and Pierquin's response was worded thus: "Monsieur Pierquin-Claes de Molina-Nourho, Mayor of the city of Douai, Chevalier of the Legion of Honor, will have *that* of being present," etc.

Marguerite accepted his offer only in so far as it related to his professional advice, fearing to compromise her dignity as a woman, her sister's future, or her father's authority. The same day she confided her sister to the care of Josette and Martha, who were devoted body and soul to their young mistress, and entered into all her plans of retrenchment; and Marguerite set out at once for Waignies, where she began to put her schemes into execution at once, benefited by Pierquin's experience.

The notary reckoned up the time and trouble expended, and regarded it as an excellent investment; he was putting them out to interest, as it were, and, with such a prospect before him, he had no mind to grudge the outlay.

In the first place, he endeavored to spare Marguerite the trouble of clearing the land and getting it ready for cultivation. He found three sons of wealthy farmers, young men who were anxious to settle themselves; to them he pointed out the attractive possibilities offered by such a fertile soil, and succeeded in letting the land to them just as it was, on a long lease. For the first three years they were to pay no rent at all, in the fourth they undertook to pay six thousand francs, twelve thousand in the sixth, and after that, fifteen thousand francs yearly till the expiration of the lease. They also undertook to drain the land, to make plantations, and purchase cattle. While the steadings were in course of erection they began to clear the ground.

Four years after Balthazar's departure, Marguerite had almost retrieved the fortunes of her brother and sister. Two hundred thousand francs, lent by Emmanuel de Solis, had covered the expenses of the farm buildings. Advice and more substantial help had been readily given to the brave girl, for every one admired Marguerite's courage. She personally superintended the building operations, and looked after her contracts and leases with the good sense, energy, and perseverance which a woman can display when she is sustained by strong feeling.

After the fifth year Marguerite could devote thirty thousand francs of her income to paying off the mortgages on her father's property, and to repairing the havoc wrought by Balthazar's passion in the old house. Besides the rent from their own farms, they had the interest on the capital invested in her brother's name, and the proceeds of her father's property. The process of extinction of the debt was bound to be more and more rapid as the amount of interest decreased. Emmanuel de Solis, moreover, had persuaded Marguerite to take the remaining hundred thousand francs of his uncle's bequest, as well as some twenty thousand francs which he himself had saved, so that in the third year of her administration she could pay off a fairly large amount of debt. This life of courage, self-denial, and self-sacrifice lasted for five years, but it ended at last, thanks to Marguerite's influence and supervision, in complete success.

Gabriel had become a civil engineer, and with his great-uncle's help had made a rapid fortune by the construction of a canal. He found favor in the eyes of his cousin, Mlle. Conyncks, whom her father idolized, one of the richest heiresses in all Flanders. In 1824 Claes' property was free, and the house in the Rue de Paris had repaired its losses. Pierquin made a formal application to Balthazar for Félicie's hand, and M. de Solis asked for Marguerite.

At the beginning of the month of January 1825, Marguerite and M. Conyncks set out for Brittany to bring back the exiled father, whom every one longed to see in his home

again. He had resigned his post that he might spend the rest of his days among his children, and his presence should sanction their happiness. Marguerite had often bewailed the empty spaces on the walls of the picture-gallery and the state apartments, which must meet their father's eyes on his return, so that while she was away Pierquin and M. de Solis plotted with Félicie to prepare a surprise for her; the younger sister should also have a share in the restoration of the Maison Claes. Both gentlemen had bought several fine pictures, which they presented to Félicie, so that the gallery might be adorned as of old. The same thought had occurred to M. Conyncks, who wished to show his appreciation of Marguerite's noble conduct, and of the way in which she had devoted herself to fulfilling her dying mother's request. He arranged that fifty of his finest pictures, together with some of those that Balthazar had previously sold, should be sent to fill the picture-gallery, where there were now no more blank spaces.

Marguerite had visited her father several times, Jean or her sister accompanying her on each journey; but, since her last visit, old age seemed to have gained on Balthazar. He lived extremely penuriously, for nearly all his income was spent on the experiment which brought nothing but disappointment, and probably the alarming symptoms were due to his manner of life. He was only sixty-five years of age, but he looked like a man of eighty. His eyes were deeply sunk in his face, his eyebrows were white, his hair hung in a scanty fringe round his head, he allowed his beard to grow, cutting it with a pair of scissors when its length annoyed him, he stooped like an old vine-dresser, his neglected dress suggested a degree of wretchedness that was frightful when combined with his look of decrepitude. Sometimes his face looked noble still when a great thought lighted it up, but the outlines of his features were obliterated by wrinkles; his fixed gaze, the desperate look in his eyes, and his restless uneasiness seemed to be symptoms of insanity, or rather of many forms of insanity. A sudden gleam of hope would give him

the look of a monomaniac; an access of impatience, that he could not guess this secret which flitted before him and eluded his grasp like a will-o'-the-wisp, would blaze out into impotent anger like madness, to be followed by a burst of laughter at his own folly; but as a rule he lived in a state of the deepest dejection, and every phase of frenzy was merged in the dull melancholy of the idiot. However fleeting and imperceptible these changes of expression might be to strangers, they were unhappily only too obvious for those who had known the once noble face, the Claes of former years, so sublime in goodness and so great-hearted, of whom scarcely a trace could now be recognized.

Lemulquinier, like his master, was old and worn by incessant toil, but he had not borne the same burden, nor endured the constant strain of thought; a curious mixture of anxiety and admiration in the way in which he looked at his master might easily have misled a casual observer; he listened respectfully to Claes' slightest word, and watched his movements with a kind of tenderness; he looked after his great and learned master with a care like a mother's; he even seemed to protect him, and, in some ways, actually did protect him, for Balthazar never took any thought for the needs of physical existence. It was touching and painful to see the two old men, both wrapped in the same thought, both so sure of the reality of their hope, inspired by the same restless longing; it was as if they had but one life between them—the one was the soul, and the other the body. When Marguerite and M. Conyncks arrived they found M. Claes living in an inn; his successor had taken his place at once.

Through all the preoccupation of science, Balthazar had felt stirrings of the desire to see his country, his home, and children once more; his daughter's letter had brought good news; he had begun to dream of a crowning series of experiments, which should surely yield at last the secret of the Absolute, and he awaited Marguerite's coming with great impatience.

The young girl shed tears of joy as she flung herself into his arms. This time she had come to receive her reward, the reward of a painful and difficult task, and to ask pardon for her brilliant success in it. But as she looked more closely at her father, she was shocked at the changes wrought in him since the previous visit; she felt as if she had committed a crime, like some great man who violates the liberties of his country to save its national existence. M. Conyncks shared his niece's misgivings; he insisted that his cousin must be moved at once, that the air of his native Douai might restore him to health, as the life by his own hearth should restore his reason.

After the first outpourings of affection, which were much warmer on Balthazar's part than Marguerite had expected, he was strangely attentive to her wishes; he expressed his regret at receiving her in such a poor place; he consulted her tastes in the ordering of their meals, and was as sedulously watchful as a lover. But in his manner also there was something of the uneasiness and anxiety of the culprit who wishes to secure a favorable hearing from a judge. Marguerite knew her father so well that she guessed the motives underlying this affectionate solicitude; she thought that he must have incurred debts in the town, which he was anxious to pay before he went. She watched her father narrowly for a while, and a human heart was laid bare to her gaze. Balthazar seemed to have grown little. The consciousness of his humiliation, the enforced isolation resulting from his scientific pursuits, had made him shy and almost like a child, save when the subject under discussion was connected with his beloved science. He stood in awe of his oldest daughter; he remembered her devotion in the past, the power of mind and character that she had shown, the authority with which he himself had invested her, the fortune which she had administered so ably; and the indefinable feeling of dread which had taken possession of him on the day when he resigned the authority which he had abused had no doubt grown stronger with time.

Conyncks seemed to be as nothing in Balthazar's eyes; he

saw no one but his daughter, and thought of no one else; he even seemed to dread her, as a weak-minded man is overawed by the wife whose will is stronger than his own. Marguerite's heart smote her when she detected a look of terror in his eyes, an expression like that of some little child who has been doing wrong. The noble girl could not understand the contradiction between the magnificent stern outlines of the head, the features worn by scientific labors and strenuous thought, and the weak smile on Balthazar's lips, the expression of artless servility in his face. This sharp contrast between greatness and littleness was very painful to her; she resolved to use her influence to restore her father's self-respect before the great day which was to restore him to his family. When they were left together for a moment, she began at once, seizing the opportunity to say in his ear:

"Have you any debts here, father?"

Balthazar reddened uneasily, and answered, "I do not know, but Lemulquinier will tell you; he is a good fellow, and knows more about my affairs than I do myself."

Marguerite rang for the servant, and when he came she could not help studying the faces of the two old men.

"Is something wanted, monsieur?" asked Lemulquinier.

Personal pride and family pride were two of Marguerite's strongest instincts; something in the servant's tone and manner told of an unseemly familiarity between her father and the companion of his labors which gave her a pang.

"It seems that my father is unable to reckon up what he owes here without your memory to aid him, Lemulquinier," said Marguerite.

"Monsieur owes . . ." Lemulquinier began, but checked himself at a sign from Balthazar, which did not escape Marguerite. She felt surprised and humiliated.

"Tell me exactly how much my father owes," she exclaimed.

"Monsieur owes five thousand francs here in the town to a druggist and wholesale grocer who has supplied us with caustic potash, lead and zinc, and reagents."

"Is that all?" asked Marguerite.

Balthazar made an affirmative sign to Lemulquinier, who answered like a man under a spell, "Yes, mademoiselle."

"Very well," she said, "I will give you the money."

Balthazar kissed his daughter in his joy. "You are my guardian angel, my child," he said.

He breathed more freely after that. There was less sadness in his eyes as he looked at her; but, in spite of his joy, Marguerite could see that in the depths of his heart he was still troubled, and she guessed that the five thousand francs merely represented the most pressing of the debts contracted for the expenses of the laboratory.

"Be frank with me, father," she said, as she let him draw her towards him, and sat on his knees, "do you owe more than this? Tell me everything; come back to your home without any lurking fear in your mind in the midst of the rejoicing."

"My dear Marguerite," he answered, taking her hands and kissing them with a grace that seemed like a memory of his youth, "shall you scold me?" . . .

"No," she said.

"Really?" he asked, with an involuntary start of childish joy. "Can I really tell you everything? and will you pay——"

"Yes," she said, trying to keep back the tears that came to her eyes.

"Very well, then, I owe . . . Oh! I dare not! . . ."

"Father, do tell me!"

"But it is a great deal," he went on.

She clasped her hands in despair.

"I owe thirty thousand francs to MM. Protez and Chiffreville."

"Thirty thousand francs—all my savings," she said, "but I am glad that I can give them to you," she added, with a reverent kiss on his forehead.

He sprang to his feet, caught his daughter in his arms, and spun round the room with her, lifting her off her feet

as though she had been a child; then he set her down in the armchair where she had been sitting, exclaiming, "My dear child, my treasure of love! There was no life left in me. Protez and Chiffreville have written three times; they threaten proceedings—proceedings against *me*, when I have made their fortunes——"

"Then you are still trying to find the solution of your problem, father?" said Marguerite sadly.

"Yes, still," he said, with a frenzied smile, "and I shall find it, never fear! . . . If you only knew where we are!"

"*We*, who?"

"I mean Mulquinier; he understands me at last; he is a great help to me. . . . Poor fellow, he is so faithful!"

Conyncks came in at that moment, and put an end to their conversation. Marguerite made a sign to her father to say no more; she dreaded lest he should lower himself in their uncle's eyes.

It shocked her to see the havoc wrought in that great intellect by incessant preoccupation with a problem perhaps after all insoluble. Balthazar, doubtless, could see nothing beyond his crucibles and furnaces; it never even crossed his mind that his affairs were no longer embarrassed.

They set out for Flanders next day; the journey was a sufficiently long one, and Marguerite had time to see many things on the way that threw gleams of light on the relative positions of Lemulquinier and his master. Had the servant gained the ascendency, which uneducated minds can acquire over the greatest thinkers if they feel that they are indispensable to their betters? Such natures use concession after concession as stepping stones to complete dominion, and attain their end at last by dint of dogged persistence. Or, on the other hand, was it the master who had come to feel for the servant the sort of affection that springs from use and wont, not unlike the fondness which a craftsman feels for his tool which executes his will, or the Arab for the horse to which he owes his freedom? Little things that passed under Marguerite's

watchful eyes decided her to put this affection to the test, by proposing to free Balthazar from what perhaps was a galling yoke.

They spent but a few days in Paris on their way back. Marguerite paid her father's debts, and besought the firm of chemists to send nothing to Douai without first giving her notice of Claes' orders. She persuaded her father to make some changes in his costume, and to dress as became a man of his rank. This external transformation gave Balthazar a sort of physical dignity, which augured well for a change in his ideas. Marguerite already felt something of the happiness which she looked for when her father should find the surprises that awaited him in his own house; and their departure for Douai was not long delayed.

Félicie, accompanied by her two brothers, Emmanuel, Pierquin, and the most intimate friends of the three families, rode out three leagues from the town to meet Balthazar. The long journey had given other directions to the chemist's thoughts, the sight of the Flemish landscape had stirred his heart, so that at the sight of the joyous cortège of children and friends he felt so deeply touched that tears filled his eyes, his voice shook, and his eyelids reddened; he took his children in his arms, and seemed as if he could not let them go, showing such a passionate affection for them that the onlookers were moved to tears.

He turned pale when he saw his house once more, and sprang out of the carriage with the quickness of a young man; it seemed to be a pleasure to him to breathe the air in the courtyard once more, to see every trifling detail again; his happiness was plainly visible in every gesture that he made; he held himself erect, his face grew young again.

Tears came to his eyes as he stood in the doorway of the parlor, and saw how accurately his daughter had reproduced the old-fashioned silver sconces which he had sold, and how completely every trace of their misfortunes had disappeared. A magnificent breakfast awaited them in the dining-room; the shelves above the sideboards had been filled with curiosi-

ties and silver-plate at least as valuable as the heirlooms which formerly had stood there. Long as the family breakfast lasted, Balthazar scarcely heard all that he wished to hear from each of his children. His return had brought about a sort of reaction in him; he thought of nothing but family happiness; he was a father before all things. There was the old courtliness in his manner. In the joy of that first moment of possession he did not ask by what means all that he had squandered had been recovered, and his happiness was complete and entire.

Breakfast over, the father and his four children, and Pierquin the notary, went into the parlor, and Balthazar saw, not without uneasiness, the stamped papers which a clerk had arranged on the table by which he stood, as if awaiting further instructions from his employer. Balthazar stood in amazement before the hearth as his family seated themselves.

"This," said Pierquin, "is an account of his guardianship rendered by M. Claes to his children. It is not very amusing of course," he added, laughing, after the manner of notaries, who are wont to adopt a jesting tone over the gravest matters of business, "but it is absolutely necessary that you should hear it read."

Although the circumstances of the case might justify the use of this phrase, M. Claes, with an uneasy conscience, must needs think it a reproach, and he frowned. The clerk began to read; the further he read, the greater grew Balthazar's astonishment. In the first place, it was ascertained that at the time of his wife's death her fortune had amounted to about sixteen hundred thousand francs, and at the conclusion of the statement of accounts each child's share was paid in full, everything was clear and straightforward, as if the most prudent father of a family had administered the estate. It was shown incidentally that Gabriel's mortgage on the house had been paid off, that Balthazar's dwelling was his own, and that his estates were free from all liabilities. He had recovered his honor as a man, his position as a citizen, his existence as a father all at once; he sank into an armchair,

and looked round for Marguerite, but with a woman's exquisite delicacy of feeling, she had stolen away during the reading, to make sure that all her arrangements for the fête had been fully carried out. Every one of Claes' children understood what was passing in his mind when through a film of tears his eyes sought for his daughter; she seemed to their inner vision like a strong, bright angel. Gabriel went to find Marguerite, Balthazar heard her footstep, hurried towards her, met her at the foot of the staircase, and clasped her in his arms.

"Father," she said, as the old man held her tightly, "do nothing, I implore you, to lessen your sacred authority. You must thank me, before them all, for carrying out your wishes so well; *you,* and you alone, must be the author of the changes for the better which may have been effected here."

Balthazar raised his eyes to heaven, looked at his daughter and folded his arms; his face wore a look which none of his children had seen for ten years, as he said, "Why are you not here, Pepita, to admire our child?"

He could say no more. He held his daughter in a tight embrace for a moment, and went back to the parlor.

"Children," he said, with the noble bearing which had so pre-eminently distinguished him in former years, "we all owe a debt of thanks and gratitude to my daughter Marguerite for the courage and prudence with which she has carried out my plans, while I, too much absorbed by scientific research, left the administration of our affairs and the reins of authority in her hands."

"Ah! now we will read the marriage contracts," said Pierquin, glancing at the clock. "But I have nothing to do with that, inasmuch as the law forbids me to draw up documents for myself and my relations; so M. Raparlier's uncle is coming."

The friends who had been invited to the dinner given to celebrate M. Claes' return and the signing of the contracts now began to arrive, and the servants brought the wedding presents. The assemblage, which rapidly grew, was brilliant

by reason of the rank of the visitors and the splendor of their toilettes. The three families thus brought together to witness their children's happiness had striven to outshine each other. The parlor was filled almost at once with splendid gifts for the betrothed couples. Gold flowed in on them and sparkled there, stuffs lay unfolded, cashmere shawls lay among necklaces and jewels. Givers and receivers alike felt heartfelt joy; an almost childish delight shone visibly in all faces, so that the magnificence and costliness of the gifts were forgotten by those less nearly concerned, who, as a rule, are sufficiently ready to amuse themselves by counting up the cost.

The ceremony soon began. After the manner traditional in the family of Claes, the parents alone were seated; every one else who was present remained standing about them at a little distance. On the side of the parlor nearest the garden stood Gabriel Claes and Mlle. Conyncks, next to them M. de Solis and Marguerite, her sister Félicie and Pierquin. Balthazar and M. Conyncks (the only two who were seated) took up their position on either side of the notary who had succeeded Pierquin. Jean stood behind his father's armchair; and on the opposite side of the room, nearest the courtyard, stood an imposing circle, composed of a score of well-dressed women and several men, near relations of Pierquin, Conyncks, or of the Claes, the mayor of Douai, before whom the marriages were to take place, and a dozen of the most devoted friends of the three families, including the First President of the Court-Royal of Douai, and the curé of Saint-Pierre. The homage paid by such an assemblage to the fathers, who seemed for a moment to be invested with regal dignity, gave an almost patriarchal color to the scene. For the first time, during sixteen years, Balthazar forgot the Quest of the Absolute for a moment.

All the persons who had been invited to the signing of the contract and to the dinner were now present. M. Raparlier, having ascertained this from Marguerite and her sister, had returned to his place and taken up the contract of marriage between Marguerite and Emmanuel de Solis, which was to

be read first, when the door suddenly flew open, and Lemulquinier's face appeared beaming with joy and excitement.

"Monsieur! monsieur!" he cried.

Balthazar gave Marguerite a despairing glance, beckoned to her, and they went out into the garden together. A presentiment of impending trouble fell on those assembled.

"I did not dare to tell you, dear child," the father said to his daughter, "but you have done so much for me that you will surely help me out of this new trouble. Lemulquinier lent me his savings for my last experiment, which was unsuccessful; he lent me twenty thousand francs, and doubtless the wretched fellow has found out that I am rich again, and wants to have his money; let him have it at once. Oh! my angel, you owe your father's life to him, for he was my sole support and comfort through all my failures; he alone still had faith in me. Without him I must have died——"

"Monsieur, monsieur!" cried Lemulquinier.

"Well?" said Balthazar, turning towards him.

"A diamond!"

At the sight of the diamond in the old servant's hand, Claes rushed to the parlor. Lemulquinier began in a whisper:

"I went up to the laboratory——"

The chemist, completely forgetful of his surroundings, gave the old Fleming a look which can only be rendered by the words:

"You were the first to go up to the laboratory!"

"And I found this diamond there," the servant went on, "in the capsule which communicated with that battery which we left to its own devices—and it has done the trick, sir!" he added, holding up a white diamond of octahedral form, so brilliant that the eyes of all those assembled were attracted by it.

"My children and friends," said Balthazar, "forgive my old servant, forgive me. . . . This will drive me mad! At some time during the past seven years chance has brought about in my laboratory this result that I have sought in vain to compass for sixteen years—and I was not there! How has

it come about? I have no idea. Oh, yes; I know that I submitted a combination of sulphur and carbon to the influence of a voltaic battery, but the process should have been watched from day to day. And now, during my absence, the power of God has been manifested in my laboratory, and I have been unable to watch its workings, for this has been brought about gradually, of course! It is overwhelming, is it not? Accursed exile! accursed fatality! Ah! if only I had watched this long, this slow, this sudden—I know not what to call it—crystallization, transformation, *miracle* in fact, my children would be—well, richer still. Perhaps the Problem would still remain to be solved, but at least the first rays of the dawn of my glory would have shone upon my country; and this moment, when the longings of affection are satisfied, though it glows with our happiness, would have been gladdened yet more by the sunlight of science."

Every one kept silence; the disconnected phrases wrung from him by agony were too sincere not to be sublime. All at once Balthazar recovered himself, forced back his despair into some inner depth, and gave the assembly a majestic glance. Other souls caught something of his enthusiasm. He took the diamond and held it out to Marguerite, saying:

"It belongs to you, my angel."

He dismissed Lemulquinier by a sign, and spoke to the notary:

"Let us go on," he said.

The words produced a sensation among those who heard them, a responsive thrill such as Talma, in some of his parts, could awaken in a vast listening audience that hung on his words. Balthazar sat down, saying to himself, "To-day I must be a father only." He spoke in a low voice; but Marguerite, who overheard him, went over to her father, and reverently kissed his hand.

"Never was there a man so great!" said Emmanuel, when his betrothed returned to his side; "never was there so strong a will; any other would have gone mad."

As soon as the three contracts had been read and signed,

every one crowded about Balthazar to ask how the diamond had been made, but he could throw no light on the mysterious event. He looked out at the attic, and pointed to it in a kind of frenzy.

"Yes, the awful power which results from the vibrations of glowing matter, which doubtless produces metals and diamonds, manifested itself there," he said, "for one moment—by chance."

"A chance that came about quite naturally," said one of those people who like to account for everything; "the old gentleman left a real diamond lying about. It is so much saved out of all that he has burned up."

"Let us forget this," said Balthazar to the friends who stood about him; "I beg you will not speak of it again to me to-day."

Marguerite took her father's arm to lead him to the state apartments, where a banquet had been prepared. As he followed his guests along the gallery, he saw that it was filled with rare flowers, and that the walls were covered with pictures.

"Pictures!" he cried, "pictures!—and some of the old ones!"

He stopped; for a moment he looked gloomy and sad; he knew by the extent of his own humiliation how great had been the wrong that he had done his children.

"All this is yours, father," said Marguerite, guessing Balthazar's trouble.

"Angel, over whom the angels in heaven must surely rejoice," he cried, "how many times you have given life to your father."

"Let there be no cloud on your brow, and not the least sad thought left in your heart," she answered, "and you will have rewarded me beyond my hopes. I have just been thinking about Lemulquinier, dearest father; little things you have said of him now and then have made me esteem him, and I confess I have been unjust to him; he ought to live here as a humble friend of yours. Never mind about your debt to

him; Emmanuel has saved nearly sixty thousand francs, and Lemulquinier shall have the money. After he has served you so faithfully, he ought to spend the rest of his days in comfort. And do not be troubled on our account. M. de Solis and I mean to live simply and quietly—without luxury; we can spare the money until you are able to return it."

"Oh, my child! you must never leave me! you must always be your father's providence!"

When he reached the state apartments, Balthazar saw that they had been restored and furnished as splendidly as before. The guests presently went down to the dining-room on the ground floor, flowering shrubs stood on every step of the great staircase. A service of silver plate of marvelous workmanship, Gabriel's gift to his father, attracted all eyes by its splendor; it was a surprise even to the proudest burghers of Douai, who are accustomed to a lavish display of silver. The guests were waited upon by the servants of the three households of Claes, Conyncks, and Pierquin; Lemulquinier stood behind his master's chair. Balthazar, in the midst of his kinsfolk at the head of the table, read heartfelt joy in the happy faces that encircled it, and felt so deeply moved that every one was silent, as men are silent in the presence of a great joy or sorrow.

"Dear children!" he said, "you have killed the fatted calf for the return of the prodigal father."

The phrase in which the chemist summed up his position, and which perhaps anticipated harsher criticism, was spoken so generously that every one present was moved to tears; but with the tears the last trace of sadness vanished, and happiness found its expression in the blithe merriment characteristic of family festivals. After the dinner the principal families of Douai began to arrive for the ball, and in its restoration the Maison Claes more than equaled its traditional splendor.

The three weddings shortly followed; the ensuing rejoicings, balls, and banquets drew Claes into the vortex of social life for several months. His oldest son went to live near

Cambrai on an estate belonging to his father-in-law, for M. Conyncks could not bear to be separated from his daughter. Mme. Pierquin likewise left her father's roof to preside over a mansion which Pierquin had built, where he meant to live in all the dignity befitting his rank, for he had sold his practice, and his uncle Des Raquets had recently died and left him all the wealth which he had slowly amassed. Jean went to Paris to finish his education; so of all his children, only M. and Mme. de Solis remained with Balthazar in the old house. He had given up the family home at the back to them, and lived himself on the second story of the front building. So Marguerite still watched over Balthazar's comfort, and Emmanuel helped her in the congenial task.

The noble girl received from the hands of love the crown most eagerly desired of all—the wreath that is woven by happiness and kept fresh by constancy. Indeed, no more perfect picture of the pure, complete, and acknowledged happiness, of which all women fondly dream, could be found. The unity of heart between two beings who had faced the trials of life so bravely, and who felt for each other such a sacred affection, called forth the admiration and respect of those who knew them.

M. de Solis, who for some time had held an appointment as Inspector-General of the University, resigned his post to enjoy his happiness at his leisure, and remained in Douai, where his character and talents were held in such high esteem that his election as a deputy when the time came was already spoken of as certain.

Marguerite, who had been so strong in adversity, became a sweet and tender woman in prosperity. Through the rest of that year Claes was certainly deeply absorbed in his studies; but though he made a few experiments, involving but little expense, his ordinary income was sufficient for his requirements, and he seemed to neglect his laboratory work. Marguerite had adopted the old tradition of the house, gave a family dinner every month, to which her father, the Pierquins, and the Conyncks came, and received her own circle

of acquaintances one day in the week. Her *cafés* had a great vogue. Claes was usually present on these occasions, though he sometimes seemed to be scarcely conscious of his surroundings, but he went into society again so cheerfully to please his daughter that his children might well imagine that he had given up the attempt to solve his Problem. In this way three years went by.

In 1828 a piece of good fortune which befell Emmanuel took him to Spain. Although three numerous families, branches of the house of Solis, stood between him and the family estates, yellow fever, old age, and various freaks of fortune combined to leave them all childless, and the titles and entail passed to Emmanuel, who was the last of his family. By one of those chances which seem less improbable in real life than in books, the lands and titles of the Counts of Nourho had been acquired by the house of Solis. Marguerite would not be separated from her husband, who would be forced to stay long enough in Spain to settle his affairs; moreover, she looked forward to seeing the château of Casa-Real, where her mother had passed her childhood, and the city of Granada, the cradle of the de Solis family. So she went with her husband, leaving the household to Martha, Josette, and Lemulquinier, who were accustomed to its management. Marguerite had proposed to Balthazar that he should go with them, and he had declined on the score of his great age; but the fact was that he had long meditated certain experiments, which should realize his hopes at last, and this was the true reason of his refusal.

The Comte and Comtesse de Solis y Nourho stayed longer in Spain than they had intended, and a child was born to them there. It was not until the middle of the year 1830 that they reached Cadiz, intending to return to France by way of Italy; but at Cadiz, a letter came from Félicie bringing evil tidings. In eighteen months their father had completely ruined himself. Gabriel and Pierquin were obliged to allow him a fixed sum every month to pay for necessary expenses, and the money was paid to Lemulquinier. The old servant

had sacrificed his savings a second time to his master. Balthazar saw no one, not even his own children were admitted into the house. Josette and Martha were both dead; the coachman, the cook, and the rest of the servants had been dismissed one after another, and the horses and carriages had been sold. Although Lemulquinier was discreet and taciturn, there was too good ground for believing that the money which Gabriel Claes and Pierquin allowed him for necessaries was spent on his experiments. Indeed, Gabriel and Pierquin were paying the interest of a mortgage on the Maison Claes, effected without their knowledge, lest the house should be sold above his head. None of his children had any influence with the old man of seventy, who still possessed such extraordinary energy and determination even in trifles. It was just possible that Marguerite might regain her old ascendency over him, and Félicie begged her sister to come home at once; she was in terror lest her father should have put his name to bills once more. Gabriel, Conyncks, and Pierquin had taken alarm at this persistent madness which had spent seven millions of francs without result, and had decided not to pay M. Claes' debts. This letter changed Marguerite's traveling plans; she took the shortest way home to Douai. With her past savings and newly acquired wealth it would be easy to pay her father's debts once more; but she determined to do more than this, she would fulfil her mother's wishes; Balthazar Claes should not sink into a dishonored grave. Clearly she alone had sufficient influence with him to prevent him from carrying out his ruinous career to its natural end, at a time of life when great results could scarcely be expected from his enfeebled powers; but she wished to persuade him, and not to wound his susceptibilities, fearing to imitate the children of Sophocles; possibly her father, after all, was nearing the solution of the scientific problem to which he had sacrificed so much.

M. and Mme. de Solis reached Flanders in 1831, and arrived in Douai one morning towards the end of September. Marguerite ordered the coachman to drive to her house in the

Rue de Paris, and found it shut up; a violent ring at the door bell produced no answer. A shopkeeper, who lived opposite, left his doorstep, whither he had been brought by the noise of the carriages; many of the neighbors were at their windows, partly because they were glad to see the return of a family so much beloved in the town, partly stirred by a vague feeling of curiosity as to what might happen when Marguerite came back to the Maison Claes. The shopkeeper told the Comte de Solis' man that old M. Claes had left the house about an hour before. Lemulquinier had doubtless taken him to walk upon the ramparts.

Marguerite sent for a locksmith to force open the door, so as to avoid a scene with her father, if (as Félicie's letter had led her to expect) he should refuse to allow her to enter the house. Emmanuel himself, meanwhile, went in search of the old man to bring him the news of his daughter's arrival, and despatched his man with a message to M. and Mme. Pierquin.

It did not take long to force open the door. Marguerite went to the parlor to give directions about their baggage. A shiver of horror went through her as she entered—the walls were as bare as if a fire had swept over them. Van Huysium's wonderful carvings and the portrait of the great Claes had been sold to Lord Spencer, so some one said. The dining-room was empty; there was nothing there but two straw-bottomed chairs, and a wretched table, on which Marguerite saw, with dreadful misgivings, a couple of bowls and plates, two silver spoons and forks, and, on a dish, the remains of a herring, the meal, doubtless, of which Claes and his servant had just partaken. As she hurried through the state apartments, she saw that every room was as bare and forlorn as the parlor and the dining-room; the idea of the Absolute seemed to have passed through the whole house like a fire.

For all furniture in her father's room, there was a bed, a chair, and a table; a tallow candle burned down to the socket stood in a battered copper candlestick. The

house had been stripped so completely that there were no curtains in the windows; everything that could bring in a few pence, even the kitchen utensils, had been sold. Drawn by the feeling of curiosity that survives in us even in the deepest misfortune, Marguerite looked into Lemulquinier's room; it was as bare and empty as his master's. The drawer in the table stood half open, and Marguerite caught a glimpse of a pawn-ticket, the servant had pledged his watch a few days previously. She hastened to the attic; the laboratory was as well replenished as it used to be; finally, she had the door of her own room forced open: everything was as she had left it, her father had respected her apartment.

Marguerite glanced round her, burst into tears, and in her heart forgave her father. Even in the frenzy of enthusiasm, which spared nothing else, he had been checked by fatherly love and a feeling of gratitude towards her. This proof of tenderness, received in the depths of her despair, wrought in Marguerite one of those revulsions which prove too strong for the coldest hearts. She went down to the parlor, and waited for her father's coming, with an anxiety which was increased by horrible fears; she was about to see him, would he be changed? Should she see a decrepit, ailing wreck, emaciated by fastings endured through pride? Suppose his reason had failed? Her tears flowed fast in the profaned sanctuary. Scenes of her past life rose up before her. She remembered her struggles, her vain attempts to save her father from himself, her childish days, the mother who had been so happy and so unhappy; everything about her, even the face of her little Joseph who smiled on the desolation, seemed to form part of some unreal, mournful tragedy.

But for all her sad forebodings, she did not foresee the catastrophe of the drama of her father's life, a life so magnificent and so wretched. Claes' affairs were no secret. To the shame of humanity, there were no generous natures to be found in Douai who could reverence the passionate persistence of the man of genius. Balthazar was put under the ban of society; he was a bad father, who had run through half-a-

dozen fortunes, who had spent millions of francs on the search of the Philosopher's Stone in this enlightened nineteenth century, the century of incredulity, the century of, etc. . . . He was maligned and calumniated; he was branded with the contemptuous epithet of "The Alchemist." "He wants to make gold!" they scoffed, and cast it in his teeth.

Has this much-belauded century of ours shown itself so different from all other centuries? It has left genius to die with the brutal indifference of past ages that beheld the deaths of Dante, Cervantes, Tasso, *e tutti quanti;* and sovereign peoples recognize the work of genius even more slowly than kings.

So these opinions concerning Claes had gradually filtered downwards from the aristocratic section to the bourgeoisie, and from the bourgeoisie to the people. Profound compassion was felt for the aged chemist by people of his own rank, and the populace looked on him with a sort of amused curiosity; both ways of regarding him implied the scornful *Vae victis* with which the crowd closes over fallen greatness.

People, as they went past the house, used to point out the rose-window of the attic where so much gold and coal had been wasted. When Balthazar went along the street, they pointed the finger at him; his appearance was often the signal for a joke or a pitying word from the children or workpeople; but Lemulquinier, ever on the watch, translated the whisperings into a murmur of admiration for his master, who never suspected the real truth.

Balthazar's eyes still preserved the wonderful clearness which an inward vision of great ideas had given to them, but he had grown deaf. For the peasants, and for vulgar or superstitious minds, the old man was a wizard. The old and splendid home of the Claes was spoken of in narrow streets and country cottages as the "Devil's House;" nothing was lacking to give color to these absurd tales; even Lemulquinier's appearance gave rise to some of the lying legends about his master. When, therefore, the poor, faithful old servant went out to buy their scanty supply of necessaries

in the market, he not only paid higher prices than any one else for his meagre purchases, but he could buy nothing without receiving insults thrown in as a sort of make-weight; he even thought himself lucky if the superstitious market-women did not refuse to supply him with his miserable pittance of food, for it too often happened that they were afraid to endanger their souls by dealing with a tool of Satan.

The general feeling of the town was hostile to the old great man and the companion of his labors. They were not the better thought of because they were ill-clad and wore the shabby clothing of decent poverty that shrinks from begging. Open insult was sure to be offered them sooner or later; and Pierquin, for the sake of his family, always took the precaution of sending two or three of his servants to follow the old men at a distance, and to interfere, if necessary, to protect them, for the influence of the Revolution of July had not improved the manners of the populace.

By some inexplicable chance Claes and Lemulquinier had gone out early this morning, and M. and Mme. Pierquin's secret vigilance was for once at fault; the two old men were out alone in the town. On their way home they sat down to rest in the Place Saint-Jacques, on a bench in the sun. Boys and children were continually passing by on their way to school, and when they looked across the square and saw the two helpless old men, whose faces brightened as they basked in the sunlight, the children made little groups, and began to talk. Children's chatter usually ends in laughter, and laughter leads to mischief, which has no cruel intention. Seven or eight of the first-comers stood at a little distance, and stared at the strange old faces; Lemulquinier heard their smothered laughter.

"There," cried one, "do you see that one with the forehead like a knee?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, he is a born Wise Man."

"Papa says he makes gold," put in another.

"Gold? What way does he make it?" asked a third, with a contemptuous gesture.

The smallest of the children, who carried a basket full of provisions, and was munching a slice of bread and butter, went artlessly up to the bench, and said to Lemulquinier:

"Is it true that you make pearls and diamonds, sir?"

"Yes, little man," said Lemulquinier, smiling, and patting his cheeks; "learn your lessons, and grow very wise, and we will give you some."

"Oh, sir! give me some too!" was the general cry.

All the children scampered up and crowded about the two chemists like a flock of birds; their cries roused Balthazar from his musings; he gave a start that made them laugh.

"Ah! you little rascals, respect a great man!" said Lemulquinier.

"A harlequin!" shouted the children; "you are sorcerers! . . . yes, sorcerers! old sorcerers! *sorcerers,* ah!"

Lemulquinier sprang to his feet, raised his cane, and threatened the children, who promptly fled, and picked up stones and mud. A workman who was eating his breakfast not far away looked up and saw Lemulquinier take his cane to drive the children away, thought that he had beaten them, and came to their aid with the formidable cry, "Down with the sorcerers!"

Thus encouraged, the children were pelting the two old men with stones as the Comte de Solis, followed by Pierquin's servants, came into the square. They were too late to stop the shower of mud with which the children bespattered the great man and his servant; the mischief was done. Balthazar had hitherto preserved the full force of his faculties by the monastic habits and temperate life of a man of science, in whom one all-absorbing passion had extinguished all others. In the course of his ruminations the meaning of this scene suddenly dawned on him. The sudden revulsion of feeling, the contrast between the ideal world in which he lived and the real world about him, was too great a shock; he fell into Lemulquinier's arms, struck down by paralysis. He was carried home on a stretcher, his two sons-in-law and the servants going with him. Nothing could prevent the crowd that

gathered from following the old man to his house. Félicie and her children were there already, and Gabriel and his wife had come from Cambrai, hearing through their sister of Marguerite's return.

The old man's return to his house was piteous to see. Even as he lay between life and death his chief terror seemed to be the thought that his children would discover the wretchedness in which he had been living. As soon as a bed could be made up in the parlor, every care was bestowed on Balthazar, and towards the end of the day some hopes of his recovery were entertained. But in spite of all that skill could do, the paralysis had left him in an almost childish condition. After the other symptoms had abated, his speech was still affected, perhaps because anger had taken all power to speak from him when he attempted to remonstrate with the children.

General indignation was felt in the town when the news of the affair became known. Some mysterious law working in the minds of men had wrought a revulsion of feeling, and M. Claes regained his popularity. He suddenly became a great man. All the admiration and esteem which had been so long withdrawn was his again. Every one praised his patient toil, his courage, his strength of will, his genius. The magistrates were disposed to treat the small delinquents very harshly; but the evil was done, and Claes' own family were the first to ask that the affair should be smoothed over.

The parlor was refurnished by Marguerite's directions, silken hangings covered the bare walls where the carved panels once had been; and when, a few days after his seizure, Claes recovered the use of his faculties, he found himself among luxurious surroundings; nothing that could contribute to his comfort had been forgotten. Marguerite came into the parlor just as he tried to say that surely she must have come back. A flush came over Balthazar's face at the sight of her; his eyes were full of tears that did not fall; he was still able to grasp his daughter's hand in his cold fingers, and in this pressure he put all the feelings and the thoughts that he

could not utter. There was something very sacred and solemn in this farewell, from a dying brain and a heart to which gratitude had brought back some of the glow of the warmth of life.

Exhausted by all his fruitless labors, worn out by his wrestlings with a giant problem, seeing, perhaps, with despair in his heart, the oblivion that waited for his memory, the Titan neared the end of his life. Everything about him spoke of his children's reverent affection. There were signs of wealth and plenty, if these things could have rejoiced his eyes; the fair picture of their faces to gladden his heart. He could now only express his affection for them by looks, and his eyes were always full of tenderness; it was as if they had suddenly acquired a strange and varied power of speech, and the light that shone in them was a language easy to understand.

Marguerite paid her father's debts; and though the ancient glories of the house of Claes had departed, it was shortly refurnished with a magnificence that effaced all memories of its forlorn condition. She was never absent from Balthazar's bedside, and strove to guess his thoughts, and to anticipate his slightest wish.

Several months went by in alternations of hope and despair that marked the progress of the final struggle between life and death in an aged frame. His children came to see him every morning, and spent the day in his room; they dined there in the parlor by his bedside, and only left him while he slept. The newspapers seemed to be his principal resource; he took a great interest in the political events of the time, listening attentively to M. de Solis, who read them aloud to him, and sat close beside him that he might hear every word.

One night towards the end of the year 1832 Balthazar's condition grew critical; the nurse, alarmed by a sudden change in the patient, sent for Dr. Pierquin, and when he came, he decided to remain; Claes' convulsions seemed so

like the agony of death that the doctor feared any moment might be his last.

The old man was struggling against the paralysis that bound his limbs. He made incredible efforts to speak; his lips moved, but no sound came from them; his thoughts seemed to blaze from his eyes; his face was drawn with unheard-of anguish; great drops of perspiration broke out on his forehead; his fingers twitched nervously in his despair.

That morning when his children came and embraced him with the affection that grew more intense and more clinging with the near approach of death, he showed none of the happiness that he always felt in their tenderness.

Emmanuel, at a warning glance from Pierquin, hastily tore the newspaper from its wrapper, thinking that perhaps the reading might divert Balthazar's mind from his physical sufferings. As he unfolded the sheet the words DISCOVERY OF THE ABSOLUTE caught his eyes and startled him, and he read the paragraph to Marguerite under his breath. It told of a bargain concluded by a celebrated Polish mathematician for the secret of the Absolute, which he had discovered. At the conclusion of the paragraph Marguerite asked her husband for the paper, but, low as the tones of his voice had been, Balthazar had heard him.

Suddenly the dying man raised himself on his elbows; his glance seemed like lightning to his terror-stricken children, the hair that fringed his temples rose, every wrinkle in his face quivered with excitement, a breath of inspiration passed over his face and made it sublime. He raised a hand, clenched in frenzy, with the cry of Archimedes—EUREKA! (*I have found it!*) he called in piercing tones, then he fell heavily back like a dead body, and died with an awful moan. His despair could be read in the frenzied expression of his eyes until the doctor closed them. He could not leave to Science the solution of the Great Enigma revealed to him too late, as the veil was torn asunder by the fleshless fingers of Death.

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE

To a Lord

. . . . . .

1845

I. GILLETTE

On a cold December morning in the year 1612, a young man, whose clothing was somewhat of the thinnest, was walking to and fro before a gateway in the Rue des Grands-Augustins in Paris. He went up and down the street before this house with the irresolution of a gallant who dares not venture into the presence of the mistress whom he loves for the first time, easy of access though she may be; but after a sufficiently long interval of hesitation, he at last crossed the threshold and inquired of an old woman, who was sweeping out a large room on the ground floor, whether Master Porbus was within. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, the young man went slowly up the staircase, like a gentleman but newly come to court, and doubtful as to his reception by the king. He came to a stand once more on the landing at the head of the stairs, and again he hesitated before raising his hand to the grotesque knocker on the door of the studio, where doubtless the painter was at work—Master Porbus, sometime painter in ordinary to Henri IV. till Mary de' Medici took Rubens into favor.

The young man felt deeply stirred by an emotion that must thrill the hearts of all great artists when, in the pride of their youth and their first love of art, they come into the presence of a master or stand before a masterpiece. For all human sentiments there is a time of early blossoming, a day of gen-

erous enthusiasm that gradually fades until nothing is left of happiness but a memory, and glory is known for a delusion. Of all these delicate and short-lived emotions, none so resemble love as the passion of a young artist for his art, as he is about to enter on the blissful martyrdom of his career of glory and disaster, of vague expectations and real disappointments.

Those who have missed this experience in the early days of light purses; who have not, in the dawn of their genius, stood in the presence of a master and felt the throbbing of their hearts, will always carry in their inmost souls a chord that has never been touched, and in their work an indefinable quality will be lacking, a something in the stroke of the brush, a mysterious element that we call poetry. The swaggerers, so puffed up by self-conceit that they are confident oversoon of their success, can never be taken for men of talent save by fools. From this point of view, if youthful modesty is the measure of youthful genius, the stranger on the staircase might be allowed to have something in him; for he seemed to possess the indescribable diffidence, the early timidity that artists are bound to lose in the course of a great career, even as pretty women lose it as they make progress in the arts of coquetry. Self-distrust vanishes as triumph succeeds to triumph, and modesty is, perhaps, distrust of self.

The poor neophyte was so overcome by the consciousness of his own presumption and insignificance, that it began to look as if he was hardly likely to penetrate into the studio of the painter, to whom we owe the wonderful portrait of Henri IV. But fate was propitious; an old man came up the staircase. From the quaint costume of this newcomer, his collar of magnificent lace, and a certain serene gravity in his bearing, the first arrival thought that this personage must be either a patron or a friend of the court painter. He stood aside therefore upon the landing to allow the visitor to pass, scrutinizing him curiously the while. Perhaps he might hope to find the good nature of an artist or to receive the good offices of an amateur not unfriendly to the arts; but besides

an almost diabolical expression in the face that met his gaze, there was that indescribable something which has an irresistible attraction for artists.

Picture that face. A bald high forehead and rugged jutting brows above a small flat nose turned up at the end, as in the portraits of Socrates and Rabelais, deep lines about the mocking mouth; a short chin, carried proudly, covered with a grizzled pointed beard; sea-green eyes that age might seem to have dimmed were it not for the contrast between the iris and the surrounding mother-of-pearl tints, so that it seemed as if under the stress of anger or enthusiasm there would be a magnetic power to quell or kindle in their glances. The face was withered beyond wont by the fatigue of years, yet it seemed aged still more by the thoughts that had worn away both soul and body. There were no lashes to the deep-set eyes, and scarcely a trace of the arching lines of the eyebrows above them. Set this head on a spare and feeble frame, place it in a frame of lace wrought like an engraved silver fish-slice, imagine a heavy gold chain over the old man's black doublet, and you will have some dim idea of this strange personage, who seemed still more fantastic in the sombre twilight of the staircase. One of Rembrandt's portraits might have stepped down from its frame to walk in an appropriate atmosphere of gloom, such as the great painter loved. The older man gave the younger a shrewd glance, and knocked thrice at the door. It was opened by a man of forty or thereabouts, who seemed to be an invalid.

"Good-day, master."

Porbus bowed respectfully, and held the door open for the younger man to enter, thinking that the latter accompanied his visitor; and when he saw that the neophyte stood awhile as if spellbound, feeling, as every artist-nature must feel, the fascinating influence of the first sight of a studio in which the material processes of art are revealed, Porbus troubled himself no more about this second comer.

All the light in the studio came from a window in the roof, and was concentrated upon an easel, where a canvas stood

untouched as yet save for three or four outlines in chalk. The daylight scarcely reached the remoter angles and corners of the vast room; they were as dark as night; but the silver ornamented breastplate of a Reiter's corselet, that hung upon the wall, attracted a stray gleam to its dim abiding-place among the brown shadows; or a shaft of light shot across the carved and glistening surface of an antique sideboard covered with curious silver-plate, or struck out a line of glittering dots among the raised threads of the golden warp of some old brocaded curtains, where the lines of the stiff heavy folds were broken, as the stuff had been flung carelessly down to serve as a model.

Plaster *écorchés* stood about the room; and here and there, on shelves and tables, lay fragments of classical sculpture—torsos of antique goddesses, worn smooth as though all the years of the centuries that had passed over them had been lovers' kisses. The walls were covered, from floor to ceiling, with countless sketches in charcoal, red chalk, or pen-and-ink. Amid the litter and confusion of color boxes, overturned stools, flasks of oil, and essences, there was just room to move so as to reach the illuminated circular space where the easel stood. The light from the window in the roof fell full upon Porbus' pale face and on the ivory-tinted forehead of his strange visitor. But in another moment the younger man heeded nothing but a picture that had already become famous even in those stormy days of political and religious revolution, a picture that a few of the zealous worshipers, who have so often kept the sacred fire of art alive in evil days, were wont to go on pilgrimage to see. The beautiful panel represented a Saint Mary of Egypt about to pay her passage across the seas. It was a masterpiece destined for Mary de' Medici, who sold it in later years of poverty.

"I like your saint," the old man remarked, addressing Porbus. "I would give you ten golden crowns for her over and above the price the Queen is paying; but as for putting a spoke in that wheel . . . the devil take it!"

"It is good then?"

"Hey! hey!" said the old man; "good, say you?—Yes and no. Your good woman is not badly done, but she is not alive. You artists fancy that when a figure is correctly drawn, and everything in its place according to the rules of anatomy, there is nothing more to be done. You make up the flesh tints beforehand on your palettes according to your formulæ, and fill in the outlines with due care that one side of the face shall be darker than the other; and because you look from time to time at a naked woman who stands on the platform before you, you fondly imagine that you have copied nature, think yourselves to be painters, believe that you have wrested His secret from God. Pshaw! You may know your syntax thoroughly and make no blunders in your grammar, but it takes that and something more to make a great poet. Look at your saint, Porbus! At a first glance she is admirable; look at her again, and you see at once that she is glued to the background, and that you could not walk round her. She is a silhouette that turns but one side of her face to all beholders, a figure cut out of canvas, an image with no power to move nor change her position. I feel as if there were no air between that arm and the background, no space, no sense of distance in your canvas. The perspective is perfectly correct, the strength of the coloring is accurately diminished with the distance; but, in spite of these praiseworthy efforts, I could never bring myself to believe that the warm breath of life comes and goes in that beautiful body. It seems to me that if I laid my hand on the firm rounded throat, it would be cold as marble to the touch. No, my friend, the blood does not flow beneath that ivory skin, the tide of life does not flush those delicate fibres, the purple veins that trace a network beneath the transparent amber of her brow and breast. Here the pulse seems to beat, there it is motionless, life and death are at strife in every detail; here you see a woman, there a statue, there again a corpse. Your creation is incomplete. You had only power to breathe a portion of your soul into your beloved work. The fire of Prometheus died out again and again in your hands; many a spot in your picture has not been touched by the divine flame."

"But how is it, dear master?" Porbus asked respectfully, while the young man with difficulty repressed his strong desire to beat the critic.

"Ah!" said the old man, "it is this! You have halted between two manners. You have hesitated between drawing and color, between the dogged attention to detail, the stiff precision of the German masters and the dazzling glow, the joyous exuberance of Italian painters. You have set yourself to imitate Hans Holbein and Titian, Albrecht Dürer and Paul Veronese in a single picture. A magnificent ambition truly, but what has come of it? Your work has neither the severe charm of a dry execution nor the magical illusion of Italian *chiaroscuro*. Titian's rich golden coloring poured into Albrecht Dürer's austere outlines has shattered them, like molten bronze bursting through the mould that is not strong enough to hold it. In other places the outlines have held firm, imprisoning and obscuring the magnificent glowing flood of Venetian color. The drawing of the face is not perfect, the coloring is not perfect; traces of that unlucky indecision are to be seen everywhere. Unless you felt strong enough to fuse the two opposed manners in the fire of your own genius, you should have cast in your lot boldly with the one or the other, and so have obtained the unity which simulates one of the conditions of life itself. Your work is only true in the centres; your outlines are false, they project nothing, there is no hint of anything behind them. There is truth here," said the old man, pointing to the breast of the Saint, "and again here," he went on, indicating the rounded shoulder. "But there," once more returning to the column of the throat, "everything is false. Let us go no further into detail; you would be disheartened."

The old man sat down on a stool, and remained a while without speaking, with his face buried in his hands.

"Yet I studied that throat from the life, dear master," Porbus began; "it happens sometimes, for our misfortune, that real effects in nature look improbable when transferred to canvas——"

"The aim of art is not to copy nature, but to express it. You are not a servile copyist, but a poet!" cried the old man sharply, cutting Porbus short with an imperious gesture. "Otherwise a sculptor might make a plaster cast of a living woman and save himself all further trouble. Well, try to make a cast of your mistress' hand, and set up the thing before you. You will see a monstrosity, a dead mass, bearing no resemblance to the living hand; you would be compelled to have recourse to the chisel of a sculptor who, without making an exact copy, would represent for you its movement and its life. We must detect the spirit, the informing soul in the appearances of things and beings. Effects! What are effects but the accidents of life, not life itself? A hand, since I have taken that example, is not only a part of a body, it is the expression and extension of a thought that must be grasped and rendered. Neither painter nor poet nor sculptor may separate the effect from the cause, which are inevitably contained the one in the other. There begins the real struggle! Many a painter achieves success instinctively, unconscious of the task that is set before art. You draw a woman, yet you do not see her! Not so do you succeed in wresting nature's secrets from her! You are reproducing mechanically the model that you copied in your master's studio. You do not penetrate far enough into the inmost secrets of the mystery of form; you do not seek with love enough and perseverance enough after the form that baffles and eludes you. Beauty is a thing severe and unapproachable, never to be won by a languid lover. You must lie in wait for her coming and take her unawares, press her hard and clasp her in a tight embrace, and force her to yield. Form is a Proteus more intangible and more manifold than the Proteus of the legend; compelled, only after long wrestling, to stand forth manifest in his true aspect. Some of you are satisfied with the first shape, or at most by the second or the third that appears. Not thus wrestle the victors, the unvanquished painters who never suffer themselves to be deluded by all those treacherous shadow-shapes; they persevere till nature at the last stands bare to their gaze, and her very soul is revealed.

"In this manner worked Raphael," said the old man, taking off his cap to express his reverence for the King of Art. "His transcendent greatness came from the intimate sense that, in him, seems as if it would shatter external form. Form in his figures (as with us) is a symbol, a means of communicating sensations, ideas, the vast imaginings of a poet. Every face is a whole world. The subject of the portrait appeared for him bathed in the light of a divine vision; it was revealed by an inner voice, the finger of God laid bare the sources of expression in the past of a whole life.

"You clothe your women in fair raiment of flesh, in gracious veiling of hair; but where is the blood, the source of passion and of calm, the cause of the particular effect? Why, this brown Egyptian of yours, my good Porbus, is a colorless creature! These figures that you set before us are painted bloodless phantoms; and you call that painting, you call that art!

"Because you have made something more like a woman than a house, you think that you have set your fingers on the goal; you are quite proud that you need not to write *currus venustus* or *pulcher homo* beside your figures, as early painters were wont to do, and you fancy that you have done wonders. Ah! my good friend, there is still something more to learn, and you will use up a great deal of chalk and cover many a canvas before you will learn it. Yes, truly, a woman carries her head in just such a way, so she holds her garments gathered into her hand; her eyes grow dreamy and soft with that expression of meek sweetness, and even so the quivering shadow of the lashes hovers upon her cheeks. It is all there, and yet it is not there. What is lacking? A nothing, but that nothing is everything.

"There you have the semblance of life, but you do not express its fulness and effluence, that indescribable something, perhaps the soul itself, that envelops the outlines of the body like a haze; that flower of life, in short, that Titian and Raphael caught. Your utmost achievement hitherto has only brought you to the starting-point. You might now perhaps

begin to do excellent work, but you grow weary all too soon; and the crowd admires, and those who know smile.

"Oh, Mabuse! oh, my master!" cried the strange speaker, "thou art a thief! Thou hast carried away the secret of life with thee!

"Nevertheless," he began again, "this picture of yours is worth more than all the paintings of that rascal Rubens, with his mountains of Flemish flesh raddled with vermilion, his torrents of red hair, his riot of color. You, at least, have color there, and feeling and drawing—the three essentials in art."

The young man roused himself from his deep musings.

"Why, my good man, the Saint is sublime!" he cried. "There is a subtlety of imagination about those two figures, the Saint Mary and the Shipman, that cannot be found among Italian masters; I do not know a single one of them capable of imagining the Shipman's hesitation."

"Did that little malapert come with you?" asked Porbus of the older man.

"Alas! master, pardon my boldness," cried the neophyte, and the color mounted to his face. "I am unknown—a dauber by instinct, and but lately come to this city—the fountain-head of all learning."

"Set to work," said Porbus, handing him a bit of red chalk and a sheet of paper.

The newcomer quickly sketched the Saint Mary line for line.

"Aha!" exclaimed the old man. "Your name?" he added.

The young man wrote "Nicolas Poussin" below the sketch.

"Not bad that for a beginning," said the strange speaker, who had discoursed so wildly. "I see that we can talk art in your presence. I do not blame you for admiring Porbus' saint. In the eyes of the world she is a masterpiece, and those alone who have been initiated into the inmost mysteries of art can discover her shortcomings. But it is worth while to give you the lesson, for you are able to understand it, so I will show you how little it needs to complete this picture. You must be

all eyes, all attention, for it may be that such a chance of learning will never come in your way again.—Porbus! your palette."

Porbus went in search of palette and brushes. The little old man turned back his sleeves with impatient energy, seized the palette, covered with many hues, that Porbus handed to him, and snatched rather than took a handful of brushes of various sizes from the hands of his acquaintance. His pointed beard suddenly bristled—a menacing movement that expressed the prick of a lover's fancy. As he loaded his brush, he muttered between his teeth, "These paints are only fit to fling out of the window, together with the fellow who ground them, their crudeness and falseness are disgusting! How can one paint with this?"

He dipped the tip of the brush with feverish eagerness in the different pigments, making the circuit of the palette several times more quickly than the organist of a cathedral sweeps the octaves on the keyboard of his clavier for the *O Filii* at Easter.

Porbus and Poussin, on either side of the easel, stood stock-still, watching with intense interest.

"Look, young man," he began again, "see how three or four strokes of the brush and a thin glaze of blue let in the free air to play about the head of the poor Saint, who must have felt stifled and oppressed by the close atmosphere! See how the drapery begins to flutter; you feel that it is lifted by the breeze! A moment ago it hung as heavily and stiffly as if it were held out by pins. Do you see how the satin sheen that I have just given to the breast rends the pliant, silken softness of a young girl's skin, and how the brown red, blended with burnt ochre, brings warmth into the cold gray of the deep shadow where the blood lay congealed instead of coursing through the veins? Young man, young man, no master could teach you how to do this that I am doing before your eyes. Mabuse alone possessed the secret of giving life to his figures; Mabuse had but one pupil—that was I. I have none, and I am old. You have sufficient intelligence to imagine the rest from the glimpses that I am giving you."

While the old man was speaking, he gave a touch here and there; sometimes two strokes of the brush, sometimes a single one; but every stroke told so well, that the whole picture seemed transfigured—the painting was flooded with light. He worked with such passionate fervor, that beads of sweat gathered upon his bare forehead; he worked so quickly, in brief, impatient jerks, that it seemed to young Poussin as if some familiar spirit inhabiting the body of this strange being took a grotesque pleasure in making use of the man's hands against his own will. The unearthly glitter of his eyes, the convulsive movements that seemed like struggles, gave to this fancy a semblance of truth which could not but stir a young imagination. The old man continued, saying as he did so:

"Paf! paf! that is how to lay it on, young man!—Little touches! come and bring a glow into those icy cold tones for me! Just so! Pon! pon! pon!" and those parts of the picture that he had pointed out as cold and lifeless flushed with warmer hues, a few bold strokes of color brought all the tones of the picture into the required harmony with the glowing tints of the Egyptian, and the differences in temperament vanished.

"Look you, youngster, the last touches make the picture. Porbus has given it a hundred strokes for every one of mine. No one thanks us for what lies beneath. Bear that in mind."

At last the restless spirit stopped, and turning to Porbus and Poussin, who were speechless with admiration, he spoke:

"This is not as good as my *Belle Noiseuse;* still one might put one's name to such a thing as this.—Yes, I would put my name to it," he added, rising to reach for a mirror, in which he looked at the picture.—"And now," he said, "will you both come and breakfast with me? I have a smoked ham and some very fair wine! . . . Eh! eh! the times may be bad, but we can still have some talk about art! We can talk like equals. . . . Here is a little fellow who has aptitude," he added, laying a hand on Nicolas Poussin's shoulder.

In this way the stranger became aware of the threadbare condition of the Norman's doublet. He drew a leather purse

from his girdle, felt in it, found two gold coins, and held them out.

"I will buy your sketch," he said.

"Take it," said Porbus, as he saw the other start and flush with embarrassment, for Poussin had the pride of poverty. "Pray take it; he has a couple of king's ransoms in his pouch!"

The three came down together from the studio, and, talking of art by the way, reached a picturesque wooden house hard by the Pont Saint-Michel. Poussin wondered a moment at its ornament, at the knocker, at the frames of the casements, at the scroll work designs, and in the next he stood in a vast low-ceiled room. A table, covered with tempting dishes, stood near the blazing fire, and (luck unhoped for) he was in the company of two great artists full of genial good humor.

"Do not look too long at that canvas, young man," said Porbus, when he saw that Poussin was standing, struck with wonder, before a painting. "You would fall a victim to despair."

It was the *Adam* painted by Mabuse to purchase his release from the prison where his creditors had so long kept him. And as a matter of fact, the figure stood out so boldly and convincingly, that Nicolas Poussin began to understand the real meaning of the words poured out by the old artist, who was himself looking at the picture with apparent satisfaction, but without enthusiasm. "I have done better than that!" he seemed to be saying to himself.

"There is life in it," he said aloud; "in that respect my poor master here surpassed himself, but there is some lack of truth in the background. The man lives indeed; he is rising, and will come towards us; but the atmosphere, the sky, the air, the breath of the breeze—you look and feel for them, but they are not there. And then the man himself is, after all, only a man! Ah! but the one man in the world who came direct from the hands of God must have had a something divine about him that is wanting here. Mabuse himself would grind his teeth and say so when he was not drunk.

Poussin looked from the speaker to Porbus, and from Porbus to the speaker, with restless curiosity. He went up to the latter to ask for the name of their host; but the painter laid a finger on his lips with an air of mystery. The young man's interest was excited; he kept silence, but hoped that sooner or later some word might be let fall that would reveal the name of his entertainer. It was evident that he was a man of talent and very wealthy, for Porbus listened to him respectfully, and the vast room was crowded with marvels of art.

A magnificent portrait of a woman, hung against the dark oak panels of the wall, next caught Poussin's attention.

"What a glorious Giorgione!" he cried.

"No," said his host, "it is an early daub of mine——"

"Gramercy! I am in the abode of the god of painting, it seems!" cried Poussin ingenuously.

The old man smiled as if he had long grown familiar with such praise.

"Master Frenhofer!" said Porbus, "do you think you could send me a little of your capital Rhine wine?"

"A couple of pipes!" answered his host; "one to discharge a debt, for the pleasure of seeing your pretty sinner, the other as a present from a friend."

"Ah! if I had my health," returned Porbus, "and if you would but let me see your *Belle Noiseuse,* I would paint some great picture, with breadth in it and depth; the figures should be life-size."

"Let you see my work!" cried the painter in agitation. "No, no! it is not perfect yet; something still remains for me to do. Yesterday, in the dusk," he said, "I thought I had reached the end. Her eyes seemed moist, the flesh quivered, something stirred the tresses of her hair. She breathed! But though I have succeeded in reproducing Nature's roundness and relief on the flat surface of the canvas, this morning, by daylight, I found out my mistake. Ah! to achieve that glorious result I have studied the works of the great masters of color, stripping off coat after coat of color from Titian's canvas, analyzing the pigments of the king of light. Like that

sovereign painter, I began the face in a slight tone with a supple and fat paste—for shadow is but an accident; bear that in mind, youngster!—Then I began afresh, and by half-tones and thin glazes of color less and less transparent, I gradually deepened the tints to the deepest black of the strongest shadows. An ordinary painter makes his shadows something entirely different in nature from the high lights; they are wood or brass, or what you will, anything but flesh in shadow. You feel that even if those figures were to alter their position, those shadow stains would never be cleansed away, those parts of the picture would never glow with light.

"I have escaped one mistake, into which the most famous painters have sometimes fallen; in my canvas the whiteness shines through the densest and most persistent shadow. I have not marked out the limits of my figure in hard, dry outlines, and brought every least anatomical detail into prominence (like a host of dunces, who fancy that they can draw because they can trace a line elaborately smooth and clean), for the human body is not contained within the limits of line. In this the sculptor can approach the truth more nearly than we painters. Nature's way is a complicated succession of curve within curve. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as drawing.—Do not laugh, young man; strange as that speech may seem to you, you will understand the truth in it some day.—A line is a method of expressing the effect of light upon an object; but there are no lines in nature, everything is solid. We draw by modeling, that is to say, that we disengage an object from its setting; the distribution of the light alone gives to a body the appearance by which we know it. So I have not defined the outlines; I have suffused them with a haze of half-tints warm or golden, in such a sort that you cannot lay your finger on the exact spot where background and contours meet. Seen from near, the picture looks a blur; it seems to lack definition; but step back two paces, and the whole thing becomes clear, distinct, and solid; the body stands out, the rounded form comes into relief; you feel that the air plays round it. And yet—I

am not satisfied; I have misgivings. Perhaps one ought not to draw a single line; perhaps it would be better to attack the face from the centre, taking the highest prominences first, proceeding from them through the whole range of shadows to the heaviest of all. Is not this the method of the sun, the divine painter of the world? Oh, Nature, Nature! who has surprised thee, fugitive? But, after all, too much knowledge, like ignorance, brings you to a negation. I have doubts about my work."

There was a pause. Then the old man spoke again. "I have been at work upon it for ten years, young man; but what are ten short years in a struggle with Nature? Do we know how long Sir Pygmalion wrought at the one statue that came to life?"

The old man fell into deep musings, and gazed before him with wide unseeing eyes, while he played unheedingly with his knife.

"Look, he is in converse with his *dæmon!*" murmured Porbus.

At the word, Nicolas Poussin felt himself carried away by an unaccountable accession of artist's curiosity. For him the old man, at once intent and inert, the seer with the unseeing eyes, became something more than a man—a fantastic spirit living in a mysterious world, and countless vague thoughts awoke within his soul. The effect of this species of fascination upon his mind can no more be described in words than the passionate longing awakened in an exile's heart by the song that recalls his home. He thought of the scorn that the old man affected to display for the noblest efforts of art, of his wealth, his manners, of the deference paid to him by Porbus. The mysterious picture, the work of patience on which he had wrought so long in secret, was doubtless a work of genius, for the head of the Virgin which young Poussin had admired so frankly was beautiful even beside Mabuse's *Adam* —there was no mistaking the imperial manner of one of the princes of art. Everything combined to set the old man beyond the limits of human nature.

Out of the wealth of fancies in Nicolas Poussin's brain an idea grew, and gathered shape and clearness. He saw in this supernatural being a complete type of the artist's nature, a nature mocking and kindly, barren and prolific, an erratic spirit intrusted with great and manifold powers which she too often abuses, leading sober reason, the Philistine, and sometimes even the amateur forth into a stony wilderness where they see nothing; but the white-winged maiden herself, wild as her fancies may be, finds epics there and castles and works of art. For Poussin, the enthusiast, the old man, was suddenly transfigured, and became Art incarnate, Art with its mysteries, its vehement passion and its dreams.

"Yes, my dear Porbus," Frenhofer continued, "hitherto I have never found a flawless model, a body with outlines of perfect beauty, the carnations—Ah! where does she live?" he cried, breaking in upon himself, "the undiscoverable Venus of the older time, for whom we have sought so often, only to find the scattered gleams of her beauty here and there? Oh! to behold once and for one moment, Nature grown perfect and divine, the Ideal at last, I would give all that I possess. . . . Nay, Beauty divine, I would go to seek thee in the dim land of the dead; like Orpheus, I would go down into the Hades of Art to bring back the life of art from among the shadows of death."

"We can go now," said Porbus to Poussin. "He neither hears nor sees us any longer."

"Let us go to his studio," said young Poussin, wondering greatly.

"Oh! the old fox takes care that no one shall enter it. His treasures are so carefully guarded that it is impossible for us to come at them. I have not waited for your suggestion and your fancy to attempt to lay hands on this mystery by force."

"So there is a mystery?"

"Yes," answered Porbus. "Old Frenhofer is the only pupil Mabuse would take. Frenhofer became the painter's friend, deliverer, and father; he sacrificed the greater part of his fortune to enable Mabuse to indulge in riotous extravagance, and

in return Mabuse bequeathed to him the secret of relief, the power of giving to figures the wonderful life, the flower of Nature, the eternal despair of art, the secret which Mabuse knew so well that one day when he had sold the flowered brocade suit in which he should have appeared at the Entry of Charles V., he accompanied his master in a suit of paper painted to resemble the brocade. The peculiar richness and splendor of the stuff struck the Emperor; he complimented the old drunkard's patron on the artist's appearance, and so the trick was brought to light. Frenhofer is a passionate enthusiast, who sees above and beyond other painters. He has meditated profoundly on color, and the absolute truth of line; but by the way of much research he has come to doubt the very existence of the objects of his search. He says, in moments of despondency, that there is no such thing as drawing, and that by means of lines we can only reproduce geometrical figures; but that is overshooting the mark, for by outline and shadow you can reproduce form without any color at all, which shows that our art, like Nature, is composed of an infinite number of elements. Drawing gives you the skeleton, the anatomical framework, and color puts the life into it; but life without the skeleton is even more incomplete than a skeleton without life. But there is something else truer still, and it is this—for painters, practice and observation are everything; and when theories and poetical ideas begin to quarrel with the brushes, the end is doubt, as has happened with our good friend, who is half crack-brained enthusiast, half painter. A sublime painter! but, unluckily for him, he was born to riches, and so he has leisure to follow his fancies. Do not you follow his example! Work! painters have no business to think, except brush in hand."

"We will find a way into his studio!" cried Poussin confidently. He had ceased to heed Porbus' remarks. The other smiled at the young painter's enthusiasm, asked him to come to see him again, and they parted.

Nicolas Poussin went slowly back to the Rue de la Harpe, and passed the modest hostelry where he was lodging without

noticing it. A feeling of uneasiness prompted him to hurry up the crazy staircase till he reached a room at the top, a quaint, airy recess under the steep, high-pitched roof common among houses in old Paris. In the one dingy window of the place sat a young girl, who sprang up at once when she heard some one at the door; it was the prompting of love; she had recognized the painter's touch on the latch.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked.

"The matter is . . . is . . . Oh! I have felt that I am a painter! Until to-day I have had doubts, but now I believe in myself! There is the making of a great man in me! Never mind, Gillette, we shall be rich and happy! There is gold at the tips of those brushes——"

He broke off suddenly. The joy faded from his powerful and earnest face as he compared his vast hopes with his slender resources. The walls were covered with sketches in chalk on sheets of common paper. There were but four canvases in the room. Colors were very costly, and the young painter's palette was almost bare. Yet in the midst of his poverty he possessed and was conscious of the possession of inexhaustible treasures of the heart, of a devouring genius equal to all the tasks that lay before him.

He had been brought to Paris by a nobleman among his friends, or perchance by the consciousness of his powers; and in Paris he had found a mistress, one of those noble and generous souls who choose to suffer by a great man's side, who share his struggles and strive to understand his fancies, accepting their lot of poverty and love as bravely and dauntlessly as other women will set themselves to bear the burden of riches and make a parade of their insensibility. The smile that stole over Gillette's lips filled the garret with golden light, and rivaled the brightness of the sun in heaven. The sun, moreover, does not always shine in heaven, whereas Gillette was always in the garret, absorbed in her passion, occupied by Poussin's happiness and sorrow, consoling the genius which found an outlet in love before art engrossed it.

"Listen, Gillette. Come here."

The girl obeyed joyously, and sprang upon the painter's knee. Hers was perfect grace and beauty, and the loveliness of spring; she was adorned with all luxuriant fairness of outward form, lighted up by the glow of a fair soul within.

"Oh! God," he cried; "I shall never dare to tell her——"

"A secret?" she cried; "I must know it!"

Poussin was absorbed in his dreams.

"Do tell it me!"

"Gillette, . . . poor beloved heart! . . ."

"Oh! do you want something of me?"

"Yes."

"If you wish me to sit once more for you as I did the other day," she continued with playful petulance, "I will never consent to do such a thing again, for your eyes say nothing all the while. You do not think of me at all, and yet you look at me——"

"Would you rather have me draw another woman?"

"Perhaps—if she were very ugly," she said.

"Well," said Poussin gravely, "and if, for the sake of my fame to come, if to make me a great painter, you must sit to some one else?"

"You may try me," she said; "you know quite well that I would not."

Poussin's head sank on her breast; he seemed to be overpowered by some intolerable joy or sorrow.

"Listen," she cried, plucking at the sleeve of Poussin's threadbare doublet. "I told you, Nick, that I would lay down my life for you; but I never promised you that I in my lifetime would lay down my love."

"Your love?" cried the young artist.

"If I showed myself thus to another, you would love me no longer, and I should feel myself unworthy of you. Obedience to your fancies was a natural and simple thing, was it not? Even against my own will, I am glad and even proud to do thy dear will. But for another, out upon it!"

"Forgive me, my Gillette," said the painter, falling upon

his knees; "I would rather be beloved than famous. You are fairer than success and honors. There; fling the pencils away, and burn these sketches! I have made a mistake. I was meant to love and not to paint. Perish art and all its secrets!"

Gillette looked admiringly at him, in an ecstasy of happiness! She was triumphant; she felt instinctively that art was laid aside for her sake, and flung like a grain of incense at her feet.

"Yet he is only an old man," Poussin continued; "for him you would be a woman, and nothing more. You—so perfect!"

"I must love you indeed!" she cried, ready to sacrifice even love's scruples to the lover who had given up so much for her sake; "but I should bring about my own ruin. Ah! to ruin myself, to lose everything for you! . . . It is a very glorious thought! Ah! but you will forget me. Oh! what evil thought is this that has come to you?"

"I love you, and yet I thought of it," he said, with something like remorse. "Am I so base a wretch?"

"Let us consult Père Hardouin," she said.

"No, no! let it be a secret between us."

"Very well; I will do it. But you must not be there," she said. "Stay at the door with your dagger in your hand; and if I call, rush in and kill the painter."

Poussin forgot everything but art. He held Gillette tightly in his arms.

"He loves me no longer!" thought Gillette when she was alone. She repented of her resolution already.

But to these misgivings there soon succeeded a sharper pain, and she strove to banish a hideous thought that arose in her own heart. It seemed to her that her own love had grown less already, with a vague suspicion that the painter had fallen somewhat in her eyes.

II. CATHERINE LESCAULT

Three months after Poussin and Porbus met, the latter went to see Master Frenhofer. The old man had fallen a victim to one of those profound and spontaneous fits of discouragement that are caused, according to medical logicians, by indigestion, flatulence, fever, or enlargement of the spleen; or, if you take the opinion of the Spiritualists, by the imperfections of our moral nature. The good man had simply overworked himself in putting the finishing touches to his mysterious picture. He was lounging in a huge carved oak chair, covered with black leather, and did not change his listless attitude, but glanced at Porbus like a man who has settled down into low spirits.

"Well, master," said Porbus, "was the ultramarine bad that you sent for to Bruges? Is the new white difficult to grind? Is the oil poor, or are the brushes recalcitrant?"

"Alas!" cried the old man, "for a moment I thought that my work was finished; but I am sure that I am mistaken in certain details, and I cannot rest until I have cleared my doubts. I am thinking of traveling. I am going to Turkey, to Greece, to Asia, in quest of a model, so as to compare my picture with the different living forms of Nature. Perhaps," and a smile of contentment stole over his face, "perhaps I have Nature herself up there. At times I am half afraid that a breath may waken her, and that she will escape me."

He rose to his feet as if to set out at once.

"Aha!" said Porbus, "I have come just in time to save you the trouble and expense of a journey."

"What?" asked Frenhofer in amazement.

"Young Poussin is loved by a woman of incomparable and flawless beauty. But, dear master, if he consents to lend her to you, at the least you ought to let us see your work."

The old man stood motionless and completely dazed.

"What!" he cried piteously at last, "show you my creation, my bride? Rend the veil that has kept my happiness sacred?

It would be an infamous profanation. For ten years I have lived with her; she is mine, mine alone; she loves me. Has she not smiled at me, at each stroke of the brush upon the canvas? She has a soul—the soul that I have given her. She would blush if any eyes but mine should rest on her. To exhibit her! Where is the husband, the lover so vile as to bring the woman he loves to dishonor? When you paint a picture for the court, you do not put your whole soul into it; to courtiers you sell lay figures duly colored. My painting is no painting, it is a sentiment, a passion. She was born in my studio, there she must dwell in maiden solitude, and only when clad can she issue thence. Poetry and women only lay the last veil aside for their lovers. Have we Raphael's model, Ariosto's Angelica, Dante's Beatrice? Nay, only their form and semblance. But this picture, locked away above in my studio, is an exception in our art. It is not a canvas, it is a woman—a woman with whom I talk. I share her thoughts, her tears, her laughter. Would you have me fling aside these ten years of happiness like a cloak? Would you have me cease at once to be father, lover, and creator? She is not a creature, but a creation.

"Bring your young painter here. I will give him my treasures; I will give him pictures by Correggio and Michael Angelo and Titian; I will kiss his footprints in the dust; but—make him my rival! Shame on me. Ah! ah! I am a lover first, and then a painter. Yes, with my latest sigh I could find strength to burn my *Belle Noiseuse;* but—compel her to endure the gaze of a stranger, a young man and a painter!—Ah! no, no! I would kill him on the morrow who should sully her with a glance! Nay, you, my friend, I would kill you with my own hands in a moment if you did not kneel in reverence before her! Now, will you have me submit my idol to the careless eyes and senseless criticisms of fools? Ah! love is a mystery; it can only live hidden in the depths of the heart. You say, even to your friend, 'Behold her whom I love,' and there is an end of love."

The old man seemed to have grown young again; there was

light and life in his eyes, and a faint flush of red in his pale face. His hands shook. Porbus was so amazed by the passionate vehemence of Frenhofer's words that he knew not what to reply to this utterance of an emotion as strange as it was profound. Was Frenhofer sane or mad? Had he fallen a victim to some freak of the artist's fancy? or were these ideas of his produced by that strange lightheadedness which comes over us during the long travail of a work of art. Would it be possible to come to terms with this singular passion?

Harassed by all these doubts, Porbus spoke—"Is it not woman for woman?" he said. "Does not Poussin submit his mistress to your gaze?"

"What is she?" retorted the other. "A mistress who will be false to him sooner or later. Mine will be faithful to me for ever."

"Well, well," said Porbus, "let us say no more about it. But you may die before you will find such flawless beauty as hers, even in Asia, and then your picture will be left unfinished."

"Oh! it is finished," said Frenhofer. "Standing before it you would think that it was a living woman lying on the velvet couch beneath the shadow of the curtains. Perfumes are burning on a golden tripod by her side. You would be tempted to lay your hand upon the tassel of the cord that holds back the curtains; it would seem to you that you saw her breast rise and fall as she breathed; that you beheld the living Catherine Lescault, the beautiful courtesan whom men called *La Belle Noiseuse*. And yet—if I could but be sure——"

"Then go to Asia," returned Porbus, noticing a certain indecision in Frenhofer's face. And with that Porbus made a few steps towards the door.

By that time Gillette and Nicolas Poussin had reached Frenhofer's house. The girl drew away her arm from her lover's as she stood on the threshold, and shrank back as if some presentiment flashed through her mind.

"Oh! what have I come to do here?" she asked of her lover in low vibrating tones, with her eyes fixed on his.

"Gillette, I have left you to decide; I am ready to obey you in everything. You are my conscience and my glory. Go home again; I shall be happier, perhaps, if you do not——"

"Am I my own when you speak to me like that? No, no; I am like a child.—Come," she added, seemingly with a violent effort; "if our love dies, if I plant a long regret in my heart, your fame will be the reward of my obedience to your wishes, will it not? Let us go in. I shall still live on as a memory on your palette; that shall be life for me afterwards."

The door opened, and the two lovers encountered Porbus, who was surprised by the beauty of Gillette, whose eyes were full of tears. He hurried her, trembling from head to foot, into the presence of the old painter.

"Here!" he cried, "is she not worth all the masterpieces in the world?"

Frenhofer trembled. There stood Gillette in the artless and childlike attitude of some timid and innocent Georgian, carried off by brigands, and confronted with a slave merchant. A shamefaced red flushed her face, her eyes dropped, her hands hung by her side, her strength seemed to have failed her, her tears protested against this outrage. Poussin cursed himself in despair that he should have brought this fair treasure from its hiding-place. The lover overcame the artist, and countless doubts assailed Poussin's heart when he saw youth dawn in the old man's eyes, as, like a painter, he discerned every line of the form hidden beneath the young girl's vesture. Then the lover's savage jealousy awoke.

"Gillette!" he cried, "let us go."

The girl turned joyously at the cry and the tone in which it was uttered, raised her eyes to his, looked at him, and fled to his arms.

"Ah! then you love me," she cried; "you love me!" and she burst into tears.

She had spirit enough to suffer in silence, but she had no strength to hide her joy.

"Oh! leave her with me for one moment," said the old painter, "and you shall compare her with my *Catherine* . . . Yes—I consent."

Frenhofer's words likewise came from him like a lover's cry. His vanity seemed to be engaged for his semblance of womanhood; he anticipated the triumph of the beauty of his own creation over the beauty of the living girl.

"Do not give him time to change his mind!" cried Porbus, striking Poussin on the shoulder. "The flower of love soon fades, but the flower of art is immortal."

"Then am I only a woman now for him?" said Gillette. She was watching Poussin and Porbus closely.

She raised her head proudly; she glanced at Frenhofer, and her eyes flashed; then as she saw how her lover had fallen again to gazing at the portrait which he had taken at first for a Giorgione—

"Ah!" she cried; "let us go up to the studio. He never gave me such a look."

The sound of her voice recalled Poussin from his dreams.

"Old man," he said, "do you see this blade? I will plunge it into your heart at the first cry from this young girl; I will set fire to your house, and no one shall leave it alive. Do you understand?"

Nicolas Poussin scowled, every word was a menace. Gillette took comfort from the young painter's bearing, and yet more from that gesture, and almost forgave him for sacrificing her to his art and his glorious future.

Porbus and Poussin stood at the door of the studio and looked at each other in silence. At first the painter of the Saint Mary of Egypt hazarded some exclamations: "Ah! she has taken off her clothes; he told her to come into the light—he is comparing the two!" but the sight of the deep distress in Poussin's face suddenly silenced him; and though old painters no longer feel these scruples, so petty in the presence of art, he admired them because they were so natural and gracious in the lover. The young man kept his hand on the hilt of his dagger, and his ear was almost glued to the door. The two men standing in the shadow might have been conspirators waiting for the hour when they might strike down a tyrant.

"Come in, come in," cried the old man. He was radiant with delight. "My work is perfect. I can show her now with pride. Never shall painter, brushes, colors, light, and canvas produce a rival for *Catherine Lescault,* the beautiful courtesan!"

Porbus and Poussin, burning with eager curiosity, hurried into a vast studio. Everything was in disorder and covered with dust, but they saw a few pictures here and there upon the wall. They stopped first of all in admiration before the life-sized figure of a woman partially draped.

"Oh! never mind that," said Frenhofer; "that is a rough daub that I made, a study, a pose, it is nothing. These are my failures," he went on, indicating the enchanting compositions upon the walls of the studio.

This scorn for such works of art struck Porbus and Poussin dumb with amazement. They looked round for the picture of which he had spoken, and could not discover it.

"Look here!" said the old man. His hair was disordered, his face aglow with a more than human exaltation, his eyes glittered, he breathed hard like a young lover frenzied by love.

"Aha!" he cried, "you did not expect to see such perfection! You are looking for a picture, and you see a woman before you. There is such depth in that canvas, the atmosphere is so true that you cannot distinguish it from the air that surrounds us. Where is art? Art has vanished, it is invisible! It is the form of a living girl that you see before you. Have I not caught the very hues of life, the spirit of the living line that defines the figure? Is there not the effect produced there like that which all natural objects present in the atmosphere about them, or fishes in the water? Do you see how the figure stands out against the background? Does it not seem to you that you could pass your hand along the back? But then for seven years I studied and watched how the daylight blends with the objects on which it falls. And the hair, the light pours over it like a flood, does it not? . . . Ah! she breathed, I am sure that she breathed! Her

breast—ah, see! Who would not fall on his knees before her? Her pulses throb. She will rise to her feet. Wait!"

"Do you see anything?" Poussin asked of Porbus.

"No . . . do you?"

"I see nothing."

The two painters left the old man to his ecstasy, and tried to ascertain whether the light that fell full upon the canvas had in some way neutralized all the effect for them. They moved to the right and left of the picture; then they came in front, bending down and standing upright by turns.

"Yes, yes, it is really canvas," said Frenhofer, who mistook the nature of this minute investigation.

"Look! the canvas is on a stretcher, here is the easel; indeed, here are my colors, my brushes," and he took up a brush and held it out to them, all unsuspicious of their thought.

"The old *lansquenet* is laughing at us," said Poussin, coming once more towards the supposed picture. "I can see nothing there but confused masses of color and a multitude of fantastical lines that go to make a dead wall of paint."

"We are mistaken, look!" said Porbus.

In a corner of the canvas as they came nearer, they distinguished a bare foot emerging from the chaos of color, half-tints and vague shadows that made up a dim formless fog. Its living delicate beauty held them spellbound. This fragment that had escaped an incomprehensible, slow, and gradual destruction seemed to them like the Parian marble torso of some Venus emerging from the ashes of a ruined town.

"There is a woman beneath," exclaimed Porbus, calling Poussin's attention to the coats of paint with which the old artist had overlaid and concealed his work in the quest of perfection.

Both artists turned involuntarily to Frenhofer. They began to have some understanding, vague though it was, of the ecstasy in which he lived.

"He believes it in all good faith," said Porbus.

"Yes, my friend," said the old man, rousing himself from

his dreams, "it needs faith, faith in art, and you must live for long with your work to produce such a creation. What toil some of those shadows have cost me. Look! there is a faint shadow there upon the cheek beneath the eyes—if you saw that on a human face, it would seem to you that you could never render it with paint. Do you think that that effect has not cost unheard-of toil?

"But not only so, dear Porbus. Look closely at my work, and you will understand more clearly what I was saying as to methods of modeling and outline. Look at the high lights on the bosom, and see how by touch on touch, thickly laid on, I have raised the surface so that it catches the light itself and blends it with the lustrous whiteness of the high lights, and how by an opposite process, by flattening the surface of the paint, and leaving no trace of the passage of the brush, I have succeeded in softening the contours of my figure and enveloping them in half-tints until the very idea of drawing, of the means by which the effect is produced, fades away, and the picture has the roundness and relief of nature. Come closer. You will see the manner of working better; at a little distance it cannot be seen. There! Just there, it is, I think, very plainly to be seen," and with the tip of his brush he pointed out a patch of transparent color to the two painters.

Porbus, laying a hand on the old artist's shoulder, turned to Poussin with a "Do you know that in him we see a very great painter?"

"He is even more of a poet than a painter," Poussin answered gravely.

"There," Porbus continued, as he touched the canvas, "lies the utmost limit of our art on earth."

"Beyond that point it loses itself in the skies," said Poussin.

"What joys lie there on that piece of canvas!" exclaimed Porbus.

The old man, deep in his own musings, smiled at the woman he alone beheld, and did not hear.

"But sooner or later he will find out that there is nothing there!" cried Poussin.

"Nothing on my canvas!" said Frenhofer, looking in turn at either painter and at his picture.

"What have you done?" muttered Porbus, turning to Poussin.

The old man clutched the young painter's arm and said, "Do you see nothing? clodpate! Huguenot! varlet! scullion! What brought you here into my studio?—My good Porbus," he went on, as he turned to the painter, "are you also making a fool of me? Answer! I am your friend. Tell me, have I ruined my picture after all?"

Porbus hesitated and said nothing, but there was such intolerable anxiety in the old man's white face that he pointed to the easel.

"Look!" he said.

Frenhofer looked for a moment at his picture, and staggered back.

"Nothing! nothing! After ten years of work . . ."

He sat down and wept.

"So I am a dotard, a madman, I have neither talent nor power! I am only a rich man, who works for his own pleasure, and makes no progress. I have done nothing after all!"

He looked through his tears at his picture. Suddenly he rose and stood proudly before the two painters.

"By the body and blood of Christ," he cried, with flashing eyes, "you are jealous! You would have me think that my picture is a failure because you want to steal her from me! Ah! I see her, I see her," he cried, "she is marvelously beautiful . . ."

At that moment Poussin heard the sound of weeping; Gillette was crouching forgotten in a corner. All at once the painter once more became the lover. "What is it, my angel?" he asked her.

"Kill me!" she sobbed. "I must be a vile thing if I love you still, for I despise you. . . . I admire you, and I loathe you! I love you, and I feel that I hate you even now."

While Gillette's words sounded in Poussin's ears, Fren-

hofer drew a green serge covering over his *Catherine* with the sober deliberation of a jeweler who locks his drawers when he suspects his visitors to be expert thieves. He gave the two painters a profoundly astute glance that expressed to the full his suspicions and his contempt for them, saw them out of his studio with impetuous haste and in silence, until from the threshold of his house he bade them "Good-bye, my young friends!"

That farewell struck a chill of dread into the two painters. Porbus, in anxiety, went again on the morrow to see Frenhofer, and learned that he had died in the night after burning his canvases.

PARIS, *February* 1832.

THE MARANAS

To Madame la Comtesse Merlin

In spite of the discipline enforced by Marshal Suchet in the division he commanded in the Peninsular War, all his efforts could not restrain an outbreak of license and tumult at the taking of Taragona. Indeed, according to trustworthy military authorities, the intoxication of victory resulted in something very like a sack of the town. Pillage was promptly put down by the Marshal; and as soon as order was restored, a commandant appointed, the military administrators appeared upon the scene, and the town began to wear a nondescript aspect—the organization was French, but the Spanish population was left free to follow *in petto* its own national customs. It would be a task of no little difficulty to determine the exact duration of the pillage, but its cause (like that of most sublunary events) is sufficiently easy to discover.

In the Marshal's division of the army there was a regiment composed almost entirely of Italians, commanded by a certain Colonel Eugène, a man of extraordinary valor, a second Murat, who, having come to the trade of war too late, had gained no Grand Duchy of Berg, no Kingdom of Naples, nor a ball through the heart at Pizzo. But if he had received no crown, his chances of receiving bullets were admirably good; and it would have been in no wise astonishing if he had had more than one of them. This regiment was made up from the wrecks of the Italian Legion, which is in Italy very much what the colonial batallions are in France. Stationed in the Isle of Elba, it had provided an honorable way out of the difficulty experienced by families with regard to the future of unmanageable sons, as well as a career for those great men

spoiled in the making, whom society is too ready to brand as *mauvais sujets.* All of them were men misunderstood, for the most part—men who may become heroes if a woman's smile raises them out of the beaten track of glory; or terrible after an orgy, when some ugly suggestion, dropped by a boon companion, has gained possession of their minds.

Napoleon had enrolled these men of energy in the Sixth Regiment of the line, hoping to metamorphose them into generals, with due allowance for the gaps to be made in their ranks by bullets; but the Emperor's estimate of the ravages of death proved more correct than the rest of his calculations. It was often decimated, but its character remained the same; and the Sixth acquired a name for splendid bravery in the field, and the very worst reputation in private life.

These Italians had lost their captain during the siege of Taragona. He was the famous Bianchi who laid a wager during the campaign that he would eat a Spanish sentinel's heart—and won his bet. The story of this pleasantry of the camp is told elsewhere in the *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne;* therein will be found certain details which corroborate what has been said here concerning the legion. Bianchi, the prince of those fiends incarnate who had earned the double reputation of the regiment, possessed the chivalrous sense of honor which, in the army, covers a multitude of the wildest excesses. In a word, had he lived a few centuries earlier, he would have made a gallant buccaneer. Only a few days before he fell, he had distinguished himself by such conspicuous courage in action, that the Marshal sought to recognize it. Bianchi had refused promotion, pension, or a fresh decoration, and asked as a favor to be allowed to mount the first scaling-ladder at the assault of Taragona as his sole reward. The Marshal granted the request, and forgot his promise; but Bianchi himself put him in mind of it and of Bianchi, for the berserker Captain was the first to plant the flag of France upon the wall; and there he fell, killed by a monk.

This historical digression is necessary to explain how it came to pass that the Sixth Regiment of the line was the first

to enter Taragona, and how the tumult, sufficiently natural after a town has been carried by storm, degenerated so quickly into an attempt to sack it. Moreover, among these men of iron, there were two officers, otherwise but little remarkable, who were destined by force of circumstances to play an important part in this story.

The first of these, a captain on the clothing establishment —half civilian, half officer—was generally said, in soldierly language, to "take good care of number one."

Outside his regiment he was wont to swagger and brag of his connection with it; he would curl his moustache and look a terrible fellow, but his mess had no great opinion of him. His money was the secret of his valorous discretion. For a double reason, moreover, he had been nicknamed *Captain of the Ravens;* because, in the first place, he scented the powder a league away; and, in the second, scurried out of range like a bird on the wing; the nickname was likewise a harmless soldier's joke, a personality of which another might have been proud. Captain Montefiore, of the illustrious family of the Montefiore of Milan (though by the law of the kingdom of Italy he might not bear his title), was one of the prettiest fellows in the army. Possibly his beauty may secretly have been an additional cause of his prudence on the field of battle. A wound in the face by spoiling his profile, scarring his forehead, or seaming his cheeks, would have spoiled one of the finest heads in Italy, and destroyed the delicate proportions of a countenance such as no woman ever pictured in dreams. In Girodet's picture of the *Revolt of Cairo* there is a young dying Turk who has the same type of face, the same melancholy expression, of which women are nearly always the dupes. The Marchese di Montefiore had property of his own, but it was entailed, and he had anticipated his income for several years in order to pay for escapades peculiarly Italian and inconceivable in Paris. He had ruined himself by running a theatre in Milan for the special purpose of foisting upon the public a *cantatrice* who could not sing, but who loved him (so he said) to distraction.

So Montefiore the captain had good prospects, and was in no hurry to risk them for a paltry scrap of red ribbon. If he was no hero, he was at any rate a philosopher; besides, precedents (if it is allowable to make use of parliamentary expressions in this connection), precedents are forthcoming. Did not Philip II. swear during the battle of Saint-Quentin that he would never go under fire again, nor near it, save the faggots of the Inquisition? Did not the Duke of Alva approve the notion that the involuntary exchange of a crown for a cannon-ball was the worst kind of trade in the world? Montefiore, therefore, as a Marquis, was of Philip II.'s way of thinking; he was a Philippist in his quality of gay young bachelor, and in other respects quite as astute a politician as Philip II. himself. He comforted himself for his nickname, and for the slight esteem in which he was held by his regiment, with the thought that his comrades were sorry scamps; and even if they should survive this war of extermination, their opinion of him was not likely to gain much credence hereafter. Was not his face as good as a certificate of merit? He saw himself a colonel through some accident of feminine favor; or, by a skilfully effected transition, the captain on the clothing establishment would become an orderly, and the orderly would in turn become the aide-de-camp of some good-natured marshal. The bravery of the uniform and the bravery of the man were all as one to the captain on the clothing establishment. So some broad sheet or other would one day call him "the brave Colonel Montefiore," and so forth. *Then* he would have a hundred thousand scudi a year, he would marry the daughter of a noble house, and no one would dare breathe a word against his courage, nor to seek to verify his wounds. Finally, it should be stated that Captain Montefiore had a friend in the person of the quartermaster, a Provençal, born in the Nice district, Diard by name.

A friend, be it in the convict's prison or in an artist's garret, is a compensation for many troubles; and Montefiore and Diard, being a pair of philosophers, found compensations for

their hard life in companionship in vice, much as two artists will lull the consciousness of their hardships to sleep by hopes of future fame. Both looked at war as a means to an end, and not as an end in itself, and frankly called those who fell, fools for their pains. Chance had made soldiers of both, when they should have been by rights deliberating in a congress round a table covered with a green cloth. Nature had cast Montefiore in the mould of Rizzio, and Diard in the crucible whence she turns out diplomatists. Both possessed the excitable, nervous, half-feminine temperament, which is always energetic, be it in good or evil; always at the mercy of the caprices of the moment, and swayed by an impulse equally unaccountable to commit a crime or to do a generous deed, to act as a hero or as a craven coward. The fate of such natures as these depends at every moment of their lives upon the intensity of the impressions produced upon the nervous system by vehement and short-lived passions.

Diard was a very fair accountant, but not one of the men would have trusted him with his purse, or made him his executor, possibly by reason of the suspicion that the soldier feels of officialdom. The quartermaster's character was not wanting in dash, nor in a certain boyish enthusiasm, which is apt to wear off as a man grows older and reasons and makes forecasts. And for the rest, his humor was variable as the beauty of a blond can sometimes be. He was a great talker on every subject. He called himself an artist; and, in imitation of two celebrated generals, collected works of art, simply, he asserted, to secure them for posterity. His comrades would have been hard put to it to say what they really thought of him. Many of them, who were wont to borrow of him at need, fancied that he was rich; but he was a gambler, and a gambler's property cannot be called his own. He played heavily, so did Montefiore, and all the officers played with them; for to man's shame, be it said, plenty of men will meet on terms of equality round a gaming table with others whom they do not respect and will not recognize if they meet them elsewhere. It was Montefiore who had made that bet with Bianchi about the Spaniard's heart.

Montefiore and Diard were among the last to advance to the assault of the place, but they were the first to go forward into the town itself when it was taken. Such things happen in a *mêlée,* and the two friends were old hands. Mutually supported, therefore, they plunged boldly into a labyrinth of narrow dark little streets, each bent upon his own private affairs; the one in search of Madonnas on canvas, and the other of living originals.

In some quarter of Taragona, Diard espied a piece of ecclesiastical architecture, saw that it was the porch of a convent, and that the doors had been forced, and rushed in to restrain the fury of the soldiery. He was not a moment too soon. Two Parisians were about to riddle one of Albani's Virgins with shot, and of these light infantrymen he bought the picture, undismayed by the moustaches with which the zealous iconoclasts had adorned it.

Montefiore, left outside, contemplated the front of a cloth merchant's house opposite the convent. He was looking it up and down, when a corner of a blind was raised, a girl's head peered forth, a glance like a lightning flash answered his, and —a shot was fired at him from the building. Taragona carried by assault, Taragona roused to fury, firing from every window, Taragona outraged, disheveled, and half naked, with French soldiers pouring through her blazing streets, slaying there and being slain, was surely worth a glance from fearless Spanish eyes. What was it but a bull-fight on a grander scale? Montefiore forgot the pillaging soldiers, and for a moment heard neither the shrieks, nor the rattle of musketry, nor the dull thunder of the cannon. He, the Italian libertine, tired of Italian beauties, weary of all women, dreaming of an impossible woman because the possible had ceased to have any attraction for him, had never beheld so exquisitely lovely a profile as that of this Spanish girl. The jaded voluptuary, who had squandered his fortune on follies innumerable and on the gratification of a young man's endless desires; the most abominable monstrosity that our society can produce, could still tremble. The bright idea of setting fire to the house

instantly flashed through his mind, suggested, doubtless, by the shot from the patriotic cloth merchant's window; but he was alone, and the means of doing it were to seek, fighting was going forward in the market-place, where a few desperate men still defended themselves.

He thought better of it. Diard came out of the convent, Montefiore kept his discovery to himself, and the pair made several excursions through the town together; but on the morrow the Italian was quartered in the cloth merchant's house, a very appropriate arrangement for a captain on the clothing establishment.

The first floor of the worthy Spaniard's abode consisted of a vast dimly-lighted shop; protected in front, as the old houses in the Rue des Lombards in Paris used to be, by heavy iron bars. Behind the shop lay the parlor, lighted by windows that looked out into an inner yard. It was a large room, redolent of the spirit of the Middle Ages, with its old dark pictures, old tapestry, and antique *brazero*. A broad-plumed hat hung from a nail upon the wall above a matchlock used in guerilla warfare, and a heavy brigand cloak. The kitchen lay immediately beyond this parlor, or living-room, where meals were served and cigars smoked; and Spaniards, talking round the smoldering brazier, would nurse hot wrath and hatred of the French in their hearts.

Silver jugs and valuable plate stood on the antique buffet, but the room was fitfully and scantily illuminated, so that the daylight scarcely did more than bring out faint sparkles from the brightest objects in the room; all the rest of it, and even the faces of its occupants, were as dark as a Dutch interior. Between the shop itself and this apartment, with its rich subdued tones and old-world aspect, a sufficiently ill-lit staircase led to a warehouse, where it was possible to examine the stuffs by the light from some ingeniously contrived windows. The merchant and his wife occupied the floor above this warehouse, and the apprentice and the maid-servant were lodged still higher in the attics immediately beneath the roof. This highest story overhung the street, and was supported by

brackets, which gave a quaint look to the house front. On the coming of the officer, the merchant and his wife resigned their rooms to him and went up to these attics, doubtless to avoid friction.

Montefiore gave himself out to be a Spanish subject by birth, a victim to the tyranny of Napoleon, whom he was forced to serve against his will. These half-lies produced the intended effect. He was asked to join the family at meals, as befitted his birth and rank and the name he bore. He had his private reasons for wishing to conciliate the merchant's family. He felt the presence of his Madonna, much as the Ogre in the fairy tale smelt the tender flesh of little Thumbkin and his brothers; but though he succeeded in winning his host's confidence, the latter kept the secret of the Madonna so well that the captain not only saw no sign of the girl's existence during the first day spent beneath the honest Spaniard's roof, but heard no sound that could betray her presence in any part of the dwelling. The old house was, however, almost entirely built of wood; every noise above or below could be heard through the walls and ceilings, and Montefiore hoped during the silence of the early hours of night to guess the young girl's whereabouts. She was the only daughter of his host and hostess, he thought, probably they had shut her up in the attics, whither they themselves had retired during the military occupation of the town. No indications, however, betrayed the hiding-place of the treasure. The officer might stand with his face glued to the small leaded diamond-shaped panes of the window, looking out into the darkness of the yard below and the grim walls that rose up around it, but no light gleamed from any window save from those of the room overhead, where he could hear the old merchant and his wife talking, coughing, coming, and going. There was not so much as a shadow of a girl to be seen.

Montefiore was too cunning to risk the future of his passion by prowling about the house of a night, by knocking softly at all the doors, or by other hazardous expedients. His host was a hot patriot, a Spanish father, and an owner of

bales of cloth; bound, therefore, in each character to be suspicious. Discovery would be utter ruin, so Montefiore resolved to bide his time patiently, hoping everything from the carelessness of human nature; for if rogues, with the best of reasons for being cautious, will forget themselves in the long run, so still more will honest men.

Next day he discovered a kind of hammock slung in the kitchen—evidently the servant slept there. The apprentice, it seemed, spent the night on the counter in the shop.

At supper-time, on the second day, Montefiore cursed Napoleon till he saw his host's sombre face relax somewhat. The man was a typical swarthy Spaniard, with a head such as used to be carved on the head of a rebec. A smile of gleeful hatred lurked among the wrinkles about his wife's mouth. The lamplight and fitful gleams from the brazier filled the stately room with capricious answering reflections. The hostess was just offering a cigarette to their semi-compatriot, when Montefiore heard the rustle of a dress, and a chair was overturned behind the tapestry hangings.

"There!" cried the merchant's wife, turning pale, "may all the saints send that no misfortune has befallen us!"

"So you have some one in there, have you?" asked the Italian, who betrayed no sign of emotion.

The merchant let fall some injurious remarks as to girls. His wife, in alarm, opened a secret door, and brought in the Italian's Madonna, half dead with fear. The delighted lover scarcely seemed to notice the girl; but, lest he might overdo the affectation of indifference, he glanced at her, and turning to his host, asked in his mother tongue:

"Is she your daughter, señor?"

Perez de Lagounia (for that was the merchant's name) had had extensive business connections in Genoa, Florence, and Leghorn; he knew Italian, and replied in that language.

"No. If she had been my own daughter, I should have taken fewer precautions, but the child was put into our charge, and I would die sooner than allow the slightest harm to befall her. But what sense can you expect of a girl of eighteen?"

"She is very beautiful," Montefiore said carelessly. He did not look at her again.

"The mother is sufficiently famous for her beauty," answered the merchant. And they continued to smoke and to watch each other.

Montefiore had imposed upon himself the hard task of avoiding the least look that might compromise his attitude of indifference; but as Perez turned his head aside to spit, the Italian stole a glance at the girl, and again those sparkling eyes met his. In that one glance, with the experienced vision that gives to a voluptuary or a sculptor the power of discerning the outlines of the form beneath the draperies, he beheld a masterpiece created to know all the happiness of love. He saw a delicately fair face, which the sun of Spain had slightly tinged with a warm brown, that added to a seraphically calm expression a flush of pride, a suffused glow beneath the translucent fairness, due, perhaps, to the pure Moorish blood that brought animation and color into it. Her hair, knotted on the crown of her head, fell in thick curls about transparent ears like a child's, surrounding them with dark shadows that made a framework for the white throat with its faint blue veins, in strong contrast with the fiery eyes and the red finely-curved mouth. The *basquina* of her country displayed the curving outlines of a figure as pliant as a branch of willow. This was no Madonna of Italian painters, but the Madonna of Spanish art, the Virgin of Murillo, the only artist daring enough to depict the rapture of the Conception, a delirious flight of the fervid imagination of the boldest and most sensuous of painters. Three qualities were blended in this young girl; any one of them would have sufficed to exalt a woman into a divinity—the purity of the pearl in the depths of the sea, the sublime exaltation of a Saint Theresa, and a voluptuous charm of which she was herself unconscious. Her presence had the power of a talisman. Everything in the ancient room seemed to have grown young to Montefiore's eyes since she entered it. But if the apparition was exquisite, the stay was brief; she was taken back to her mysterious

abiding-place, and thither, shortly afterwards, the servant took a light and her supper, without any attempt at concealment.

"You do very wisely to keep her out of sight," said Montefiore in Italian. "I will keep your secret. The deuce! some of our generals would be quite capable of carrying her off by force."

Montefiore, in his intoxication, went so far as to think of marrying the fair unknown. With this idea in his mind, he put some questions to his host. Perez willingly told him the strange chance that had given him his ward; indeed, the prudent Spaniard, knowing Montefiore's rank and name, of which he had heard in Italy, was anxious to confide the story to his guest, to show how strong were the barriers raised between the young girl and seduction. Although in the good man's talk there was a certain homely eloquence and force in keeping with his simple manner of life, and with that carbine shot at Montefiore from the window, his story will be better given in an abbreviated form.

When the French Republic revolutionized the manners of the inhabitants of the countries which served as the theatre of its wars, a *fille-de-joie,* driven from Venice after the fall of Venice, came to Taragona. Her life had been a tissue of romantic adventure and strange vicissitudes. On no woman belonging to her class had gold been showered so often; so often the caprice of some great lord, struck with her extraordinary beauty, had heaped jewels upon her, and all the luxuries of wealth, for a time. For her this meant flowers and carriages, pages and tire-women, palaces and pictures, insolent pride, journeys like a progress of Catherine II., the life of an absolute queen, in fact, whose caprices were law, and whose whims were more than obeyed; and then—suddenly the gold would utterly vanish—how, neither she nor any one else, man of science, physicist, or chemist could tell, and she has returned again to the streets and to poverty, with nothing in the world save her all-powerful beauty. Yet through it all she lived without taking any thought for the past, the present, or the future.

Thrown upon the world, and maintained in her extremity by some poor officer, a gambler, adored for his moustache, she would attach herself to him like a dog to his master, and console him for the hardships of a soldier's life, in all of which she shared, sleeping as lightly under the roof of a garret as beneath the richest of silk canopies. Whether she was in Spain or Italy, she punctually adhered to religious observances. More than once she had bidden love "return to-morrow, to-day I am God's."

But this clay in which gold and spices were mingled, this utter recklessness, these storms of passion, the religious faith lying in the heart like a diamond in the mud, the life begun and ended in the hospital, the continual game of hazard played with the soul and body as its stake; this Alchemy of Life, in short, with vice fanning the flame beneath the crucible in which great careers and fair inheritances and fortune and the honor of illustrious names were melted away,—all these were the products of a peculiar genius, faithfully transmitted from mother to daughter from the times of the Middle Ages. The woman was called *La Marana.* In her family, whose descent since the thirteenth century was reckoned exclusively on the spindle side—the idea, person, authority, nay, the very name of a father, had been absolutely unknown. The name of *Marana* was for her what the dignity of *Stuart* was to the illustrious race of kings of Scotland, a title of honor substituted for the patronymic, when the office became hereditary in their family.

In former times, when France, Spain, and Italy possessed common interests, which at times bound them closely together, and at least as frequently embroiled all three in wars, the word Marana, in its widest acceptation, meant a courtesan. In those ages these women had a definite status of which no memory now exists. In France, Ninon de Lenclos and Marion Delorme alone played such a part as the Imperias, the Catalinas, and Maranas who in the preceding centuries exercised the powers of the cassock, the robe, and the sword. There is a church somewhere in Rome built by an Imperia in a fit of

penitence, as Rhodope of old once built a pyramid in Egypt. The epithet by which this family of outcasts once was branded became at last their name in earnest, and even something like a patent of nobility for vice, by establishing its antiquity beyond cavil.

But for the La Marana of the nineteenth century there came a day, whether it was a day of splendor or of misery, no man knows, for the problem is a secret between her soul and God; but it was surely in an hour of melancholy, when religion made its voice heard, that with her head in the skies she became conscious of the slough in which her feet were set. Then she cursed the blood in her veins; she cursed herself; she trembled to think that she should bear a daughter; and vowed, as these women vow, with the honor and resolution of the convict, that is to say, with the strongest resolution, the most scrupulous honor to be found under the sun; making her vow, therefore, before an altar, and consecrating it thereby, that her daughter should lead a virtuous and holy life, that of this long race of lost and sinful women there should come at last one angel who should appear for them in heaven. That vow made, the blood of the Marana regained its sway, and again the courtesan plunged into her life of adventure, with one more thought in her heart. At length she loved, with the violent love of the prostitute, as Henrietta Wilson loved Lord Ponsonby, as Mademoiselle Dupuis loved Bolingbroke, as the Marchesa di Pescara loved her husband; nay, she did not love, she adored a fair-haired half-feminine creature, investing him with all the virtues that she had not, and taking all his vices upon herself. Of this mad union with a weakling, a union blessed neither of God nor man, only to be excused by the happiness it brings, but never absolved by happiness; a union for which the most brazen front must one day blush, a daughter was born, a daughter to be saved, a daughter for whom La Marana desired a stainless life, and, above all things, the instincts of womanliness which she herself had not. Thenceforward, in poverty or prosperity, La Marana bore within her heart a pure affection, the fairest of all human sentiments,

because it is the least selfish. Love has its own tinge of egoism, but there is no trace of it in a mother's affection.

And La Marana's motherhood meant more for her than to other women. It was perhaps her hope of salvation, a plank to cling to in the shipwreck of her eternity. Was she not accomplishing part of her sacred task on earth by sending one more angel to heaven? Was not this a better thing than a tardy repentance? Was there any other way now left to her of sending up prayers from a pure heart to God?

When her daughter was given to her, her Maria-Juana-Pepita (the little one should have had the whole calendar for patron saints if the mother could have had her will), then La Marana set before herself so high an ideal of the dignity of motherhood that she sought a truce from her life of sin. She would live virtuously and alone. There should be no more midnight revels nor wanton days. All her fortunes, all her happiness lay in the child's fragile cradle. The sound of the little voice made an oasis for her amid the burning sands of her life. How should this love be compared with any other? Were not all human affections blended in it with every hope of heaven?

La Marana determined that no stain should rest upon her daughter's life, save that of the original sin of her birth, which she strove to cleanse by a baptism in all social virtues; so she asked of the child's young father a sufficient fortune, and the name he bore. The child was no longer Juana Marana, but Juana dei Mancini.

At last, after seven years of joy and kisses, of rapture and bliss, the poor Marana must part with her darling, lest she also should be branded with her hereditary shame. The mother had force of soul sufficient to give up her child for her child's sake; and sought out, not without dreadful pangs, another mother for her, a family whose manners she might learn, where good examples would be set before her. A mother's abdication is an act either atrocious or sublime; in this case, was it not sublime?

At Taragona, therefore, a lucky accident brought the La-

gounias in her way, and in a manner that brought out all the honorable integrity of the Spaniard and the nobleness of his wife. For these two, La Marana appeared like an angel that unlocks the doors of a prison. The merchant's fortune and honor were in peril at the moment, and he needed prompt and secret help; La Marana handed over to him the sum of money intended for Juana's dowry, asking neither for gratitude nor for interest. According to her peculiar notions of jurisprudence, a contract was a matter of the heart, a stiletto the remedy in the hands of the weak, and God the Supreme Court of Appeal.

She told Doña Lagounia the story of her miserable situation, and confided her child and her child's fortune to the honor of old Spain, and the untarnished integrity that pervaded the old house. Doña Lagounia had no children of her own, and was delighted to have an adopted daughter to bring up. The courtesan took leave of her darling, feeling that the child's future was secure, and that she had found a mother for Juana, a mother who would train her up to be a Mancini, and not a Marana.

Poor Marana, poor bereaved mother, she went away from the merchant's quiet and humble home, the abode of domestic and family virtue; and felt comforted in her grief as she pictured Juana growing up in that atmosphere of religion, piety, and honor, a maiden, a wife, and a mother, a happy mother, not for a few brief years, but all through a long lifetime. The tears that fell upon the threshold were tears that angels bear to heaven. Since that day of mourning and of hope La Marana had thrice returned to see her daughter, an irresistible presentiment each time bringing her back. The first time Juana had fallen dangerously ill.

"I knew it!" she said to Perez, as she entered his house.

Far away, and as she slept, she had dreamed that Juana was dying.

She watched over her daughter and tended her, and then one morning, when the danger was over, she kissed the sleeping girl's forehead, and went without revealing herself. The mother within her bade the courtesan depart.

A second time La Marana came,—this time to the church where Juana dei Mancini made her first Communion. The exiled mother, very plainly dressed, stood in the shadow behind a pillar, and saw her past self in her daughter, saw a divinely fair face like an angel's, pure as the newly fallen snow on the heights of the hills. Even in La Marana's love for her child there was a trace of the courtesan; a feeling of jealousy stronger than all love that she had known awoke in her heart, and she left the church; she could no longer control a wild desire to stab Doña Lagounia, who stood there with that look of happiness upon her face, too really a mother to her child.

The last meeting between the two had taken place at Milan, whither the merchant and his wife had gone. La Marana, sweeping along the Corso in almost queenly state, flashed like lightning upon her daughter's sight, and was not recognized. Her anguish was terrible. This Marana on whom kisses were showered must hunger for one kiss in vain, one for which she would have given all the others, the girlish glad caress a daughter gives her mother, her honored mother, her mother in whom all womanly virtues shine. Juana as long as she lived was dead for her.

"What is it, love?" asked the Duc de Lina, and at the words a thought revived the courtesan's failing heart, a thought that gave her delicious happiness—Juana was safe henceforward! She might perhaps be one of the humblest of women, but not a shameless courtesan to whom any man might say, "What is it, love?"

Indeed, the merchant and his wife had done their duty with scrupulous fidelity. Juana's fortune in their hands had been doubled. Perez de Lagounia had become the richest merchant in the province, and in his feeling towards the young girl there was a trace of superstition. Her coming had saved the old house from ruin and dishonor, and had not the presence of this angel brought unlooked-for prosperity? His wife, a soul of gold, a refined and gentle nature, had brought up her charge devoutly; the girl was as pure as she

was beautiful. Juana was equally fitted to be the wife of a rich merchant or of a noble; she had every qualification for a brilliant destiny. But for the war that had broken out, Perez, who dreamed of living in Madrid, would ere now have given her in marriage to some Spanish grandee.

"I do not know where La Marana is at this moment," he concluded; "but wherever she may be, if she hears that our province is occupied by your armies, and that Taragona has been besieged, she is sure to be on her way hither to watch over her daughter."

This story wrought a change in the captain's intentions; he no longer thought of making a Marchesa di Montefiore of Juana dei Mancini. He recognized the Marana blood in that swift glance the girl had exchanged with him from her shelter behind the blind, in the stratagem by which she had satisfied her curiosity, in that last look she had given him; and the libertine meant to marry a virtuous wife.

This would be a dangerous escapade, no doubt, but the perils were of the kind that never sinks the courage of the most pusillanimous, for love and its pleasures would reward them. There were obstacles everywhere: there was the apprentice who slept on the counter, and the servant-maid on the makeshift couch in the kitchen; Perez and his wife, who kept a dragon's watch by day, were old, and doubtless slept lightly; every sound echoed through the house, everything seemed to put the adventure beyond the range of possibilities. But as a set-off against these things, Montefiore had an ally—the blood of the Marana, which throbbed feverishly in the heart of the lovely Italian girl brought up as a Spaniard, the maiden athirst for love. Passion, the girl's nature, and Montefiore was a combination that might defy the whole world.

Prompted quite as strongly by the instincts of a chartered libertine as by the vague inexplicable hopes to which we give the name of presentiments, a word that describes them with such startling aptness—Montefiore took up his stand at his window, and spent the early hours of the night there, looking

down in the presumed direction of the secret hiding-place, where the old couple had enshrined their darling, the joy of their old age.

The warehouse on the *entresol* (to make use of a French word that will perhaps make the disposition of the house clearer to the reader) separated the two young people, so it was idle for the captain to try to convey a message by means of tapping upon the floor, a shift for speech that all lovers can devise under such circumstances. Chance, however, came to his assistance, or was it the young girl herself? Just as he took his stand at the window he saw a circle of light that fell upon the grim opposite wall of the yard, and in the midst of it a dark silhouette, the form of Juana. Everything that she did was shadowed there; from her attitude and the movement of her arms, she seemed to be arranging her hair for the night.

"Is she alone?" Montefiore asked himself. "If I weight a letter with a few coins, will it be safe to dangle it by a thread against the round window that no doubt lights her cell?"

He wrote a note forthwith, a note characteristic of the officer, of the soldier sent for reasons of family expediency to the isle of Elba, of the former dilettante Marquis, fallen from his high estate, and become a captain on the clothing establishment. He wrapped some coins in the note, devised a string out of various odds and ends, tied up the packet and let it down, without a sound, into the very centre of that round brightness.

"If her mother or the servant is with her," Montefiore thought, "I shall see the shadows on the wall; and if she is not alone, I will draw up the cord at once."

But when, after pains innumerable, which can readily be imagined, the weighted packet tapped at the glass, only one shadow appeared, and it was the slender figure of Juana that flitted across the wall. Noiselessly the young girl opened the circular window, saw the packet, took it in, and stood for a while reading it.

Montefiore had written in his own name and entreated an interview. He offered, in the style of old romances, his heart and hand to Juana dei Mancini—a base and commonplace stratagem that nearly always succeeds! At Juana's age, is not nobility of soul an added danger? A poet of our own days has gracefully said that "only in her strength does woman yield." Let a lover, when he is most beloved, feign doubts of the love that he inspires, and in her pride and her trust in him, a girl would invent sacrifices for his sake, knowing neither the world nor man's nature well enough to retain her self-command when passion stirs within her, and to overwhelm with her scorn the lover who can accept a whole life offered to him to turn away a groundless reproach.

In our sublimely constituted society a young girl is placed in a painful dilemma between the forecasts of prudent virtue on the one hand, and the consequences of error upon the other. If she resists, it not seldom happens that she loses a lover and the first love, that is the most attractive of all; and if she is imprudent, she loses a marriage. Cast an eye over the vicissitudes of social life in Paris, and it is impossible to doubt the necessity of a religion that shall ensure that there are no more young girls seduced daily. And Paris is situated in the forty-eighth degree of latitude, while Taragona lies below the forty-first. The old question of climate is still useful to the novelist seeking an excuse for the suddenness of his catastrophe, and is made to explain the imprudence or the dilatoriness of a pair of lovers.

Montefiore's eyes were fixed meanwhile on the charming silhouette in the midst of the bright circle. Neither he nor Juana could see each other; an unlucky archway above her casement, with perverse malignity, cut off all chances of communication by signs, such as two lovers can contrive by leaning out of their windows. So the captain concentrated his whole mind and attention upon the round patch on the wall. Perhaps all unwittingly the girl's movements might betray her thoughts. Here again he was foiled. Juana's strange proceedings gave Montefiore no room for the faintest hope; she was amusing herself by cutting up the billet.

It often happens that virtue and discretion, in distrust, adopt shifts familiar to the jealous Bartholos of comedy. Juana, having neither paper, pen, nor ink, was scratching an answer with the point of a pair of scissors. In another moment she tied the scrap of paper to the string, the officer drew it in, opened it, held it up against the lamp, and read the perforated characters—"Come," it said.

"'Come?'" said he to himself. "Poison, and carbine, and Perez's dagger! And how about the apprentice hardly asleep on the counter by this time, and the servant in her hammock, and the house booming like a bass viol with every sound? why, I can hear old Perez snoring away upstairs! 'Come!' . . . Then, has she nothing to lose?"

Acute reflection! Libertines alone can reason thus logically, and punish a woman for her devotion. The imagination of man has created Satan and Lovelace, but a maiden is an angelic being to whom he can lend nothing but his vices; so lofty, so fair is she, that he cannot set her higher nor add to her beauty; he has but the fatal power of blighting this creation by dragging it down to his miry level.

Montefiore waited till the drowsiest hour of the night, then in spite of his sober second thoughts, he crept downstairs. He had taken off his shoes, and carried his pistols with him, and now he groped his way step by step, stopping to listen in the silence; trying each separate stair, straining his eyes till he almost saw in the darkness, and ready to turn back at any moment if the least thing befell him. He wore his handsomest uniform; he had perfumed his dark hair, and taken pains with the toilette that set off his natural good looks. On occasions like these, most men are as much a woman as any woman.

Montefiore managed to reach the door of the girl's secret hiding-place without difficulty. It was a little cabinet contrived in a corner which projected into another dwelling, a not unusual freak of the builder where ground-rents are high, and houses in consequence packed very tightly together. Here Juana lived alone, day and night, out of sight of all eyes.

Hitherto she had slept near her adopted mother; but when Perez and his wife removed to the top of the house, the arrangements of the attics did not permit of their taking their ward thither also. So Doña Lagounia had left the girl to the guardianship of the lock of the secret door, to the protection of religious ideas, but so much the more powerful because they had become superstitions; and with the further safeguards of a natural pride, and the shrinking delicacy of the sensitive plant, which made Juana an exception among her sex, for to the most pathetic innocence Juana Mancini united no less the most passionate aspirations. It had needed a retired life and devout training to quiet and to cool the hot blood of the Maranas that glowed in her veins, the impulses that her adopted mother called temptations of the Evil One.

A faint gleam of light beneath the door in the panels discovered its whereabouts for Montefiore. He tapped softly with the tips of his finger-nails, and Juana let him in. Quivering from head to foot with excitement, he met the young girl's look of *naïve* curiosity, and read the most complete ignorance of her peril, and a sort of childlike admiration in her eyes. He stood, awed for a moment by the picture of the sanctuary before him.

The walls were hung with gray tapestry, covered with violet flowers. A small ebony chest, an antique mirror, a huge old-fashioned armchair, also made of ebony, and covered with tapestry; another chair beside the spindle-legged table, a pretty carpet on the floor—that was all. But there were flowers on the table beside some embroidery work, and at the other end of the room stood the little narrow bed on which Juana dreamed; three pictures hung on the wall above it, and at the head stood a crucifix above a little holy water stoup, and a prayer framed and illuminated in gold. The room was full of the faint perfume of the flowers, of the soft light of the tapers; it all seemed so quiet, pure, and sacred. The subtle charm of Juana's dreamy fancies, nay, of Juana herself, seemed to pervade everything; her soul was revealed by her surroundings; the pearl lay there in its shell.

Juana, clad in white, with no ornament save her own loveliness, letting fall her rosary to call on the name of Love, would have inspired even Montefiore with reverence if it had not been for the night about them and the silence, if Juana had welcomed love less eagerly, if the little white bed had not displayed the turned-down coverlet—the pillow, confidante of innumerable vague longings. Montefiore stood there for long, intoxicated by joy hitherto unknown; such joy as Satan, it may be, would know at a glimpse of paradise if the cloud-veil that envelops heaven was rent away for a moment.

"I loved you the first moment that I saw you," he said, speaking pure Tuscan in the tones of his musical Italian voice. "In you my soul and my life are set; if you so will it, they shall be yours for ever."

To Juana listening, the air she breathed seemed to vibrate with the words grown magical upon her lover's tongue.

"Poor little girl! how have you breathed the atmosphere of this gloomy place so long, and lived? You, meant to reign like a queen in the world, to dwell in the palace of a prince, to pass from festival to festival, to feel in your own heart the joys that you create, to see the world at your feet, to make the fairest splendors pale before the glorious beauty that shall never be rivaled,—*you* have lived here in seclusion with this old tradesman and his wife!"

There was a purpose in his exclamation; he wanted to find out whether or no Juana had ever had a lover.

"Yes," she answered. "But who can have told you my inmost thoughts? For these twelve months past I have been weary to death of it. Yes, I would die rather than stay any longer in this house. Do you see this embroidery? I have set countless dreadful thoughts into every stitch of it. How often I have longed to run away and fling myself into the sea! Do you ask why? I have forgotten already. . . . Childish troubles, but very keenly felt in spite of their childishness. . . . Often at night when I kissed my mother, I have given her such a kiss as one gives for a last farewell, saying in my heart, 'I will kill myself to-morrow.' After all,

I did not die. Suicides go to hell, and I was so much afraid of that, that I made up my mind to endure my life, to get up and go to bed, and do the same things hour after hour of every day. My life was not irksome, it was painful.—And yet, my father and mother worship me. Oh! I am wicked! indeed, I tell my confessor so."

"Then have you always lived here without amusements, without pleasures?"

"Oh! I have not always felt like this. Until I was fifteen years old, I enjoyed seeing the festivals of the Church; I loved the singing and the music. I was so happy, because I felt that, like the angels, I was sinless, so glad that I might take the sacrament every week, in short, I loved God then. But in these three years I have changed utterly, day by day. It began when I wanted flowers here in the house, and they gave me very beautiful ones; then I wanted . . . But now I want nothing any longer," she added, after a pause, and she smiled at Montefiore.

"Did you not tell me just now in your letter that you would love me for ever?"

"Yes, my Juana," murmured Montefiore. He put his arm round the waist of this adorable girl, and pressed her closely to his heart. "Yes. But let me speak to you as you pray to God. Are you not fairer than Our Lady in heaven? Hear me," and he set a kiss in her hair, "for me that forehead of yours is the fairest altar on earth; I swear to worship you, my idol, to pour out all the wealth of the world upon you. My carriages are yours, my palace in Milan is yours, yours all the jewels and the diamonds, the heirlooms of my ancient house; new ornaments and dresses every day, and all the countless pleasures and delights of the world."

"Yes," she said, "I should like it all very much; but in my soul I feel that I should love my dear husband more than all things else in the world."

Mio caro sposo! Italian was Juana's native speech, and it is impossible to put into two words of another language the wonderful tenderness, the winning grace with which that

brief delicious phrase is invested by the accents of an Italian tongue. "I shall find," she said, and the purity of a seraph shone in her eyes, "I shall find my beloved religion again in *him*. His and God's, God's and his! . . . But you are he, are you not?" she cried after a pause. "Surely, surely you are he! Ah! come and see the picture that my father brought me from Italy."

She took up a candle, beckoned to Montefiore, and showed him a picture that hung at the foot of the bed—Saint Michael trampling Satan underfoot.

"Look!" she cried, "has he not your eyes? That made me think, as soon as I saw you in the street, that in the meeting I saw the finger of heaven. So often I have lain awake in the morning before my mother came to call me to prayer, thinking about that picture, looking at the angel, until at last I came to think that he was my husband. *Mon Dieu!* I am talking as I think to myself. What wild nonsense it must seem to you! but if you only knew how a poor recluse longs to pour out the thoughts that oppress her! I used to talk to these flowers and the woven garlands on the tapestry when I was alone; they understood me better, I think, than my father and mother—always so serious——"

"Juana," said Montefiore, and as he took her hands and kissed them, passion shone in his eyes and overflowed in his gestures and in the sound of his voice, "talk to me as if I were your husband, talk to me as you talk to yourself. I have suffered all that you have suffered. Few words will be needed, when we talk together, to bring back the whole past of either life before we met; but there are not words enough in language to tell of the bliss that lies before us. Lay your hand on my heart. Do you feel how it beats? Let us vow, before God, who sees and hears us, to be faithful to each other all our lives. Stay, take this ring.—Give me yours."

"Give away my ring?" she cried, startled.

"Why not?" asked Montefiore, dismayed by so much simplicity.

"Why, it came to me from our Holy Father the Pope.

When I was a little girl a beautiful lady set it on my finger; she took care of me, and brought me here, and she told me to keep it always."

"Then you do not love me, Juana?"

"Ah! here it is," she cried. "Are you not more myself than I?"

She held out the ring, trembling as she did so, keeping her fingers tightly clasped upon it as she looked at Montefiore with clear, questioning eyes. That ring meant her whole self: she gave it to him.

"Oh! my Juana!" said Montefiore as he held her closely in his arms, "only a monster could be false to you. . . . I will love you for ever . . ."

Juana grew dreamy. Montefiore, thinking within himself that, in his first interview, he must not run the slightest risk of startling a girl so innocent, whose imprudence sprang rather from virtue than from desire, was fain to content himself with thinking of the future, of her beauty now that he had known its power, and of the innocent marriage of the ring, that most sublime of betrothals, the simplest and most binding of all ceremonies, the betrothal of the heart.

For the rest of the night, and all day long on the morrow, Juana's imagination would surely become the accomplice of his desires. So he put constraint upon himself, and tried to be as respectful as he was tender. With these thoughts present in his mind, prompted by his passion, and yet more by the desires that Juana inspired in him, his words were insinuating and fervent. He led the innocent child to plan out the new life before them, painted the world for her in the most glowing colors, dwelt on the household details that possess such a delightful interest for young girls, and made with her the compacts over which lovers dispute, the agreements that give rights and reality to love. Then, when they had decided the hour for their nightly tryst, he went, leaving a happy but a changed Juana. The simple and innocent Juana no longer existed, already there was more passion than a girl should reveal in the last glance that she gave him,

in the charming way that she held up her forehead for the touch of her lover's lips. It was all the result of solitude and irksome tasks upon this nature; if she was to be prudent and virtuous, the knowledge of the world should either have come to her gradually, or have been hidden from her for ever.

"How slowly the day will go to-morrow!" she said, as another kiss, still respectfully given, was pressed upon her forehead.

"But you will sit in the dining-room, will you not? and raise your voice a little when you talk, so that I may hear you, and the sound may fill my heart."

Montefiore, beginning to understand the life that Juana led, was but the better pleased that he had managed to restrain his desires that he might the better secure his end. He returned to his room without mishap.

Ten days went by, and nothing occurred to disturb the peace and quiet of the house. Montefiore, with the persuasive manners of an Italian, had gained the good graces of old Perez and Doña Lagounia; indeed, he was popular with the whole household—with the apprentice and the maid-servant; but in spite of the confidence that he had succeeded in inspiring in them, he never attempted to take advantage of it to ask to see Juana, or to open the door of that little sealed paradise. The Italian girl, in her longing to see her lover, had often besought him to do this, but from motives of prudence he had always refused. On the contrary, he had used the character he had gained and all his skill to lull the suspicions of the old couple; he had accustomed them to his habit of never rising till mid-day, soldier as he was. The captain gave out that his health was bad. So the two lovers only lived at night when all the household was asleep.

If Montefiore had not been a libertine to whom a long experience of pleasure had given presence of mind under all conditions, they would have been lost half a score of times in those ten days. A young lover, with the single-heartedness of first love, would have been tempted in his rapture into imprudences that were very hard to resist; but the Ital-

ian was proof even against Juana, against her pouting lips, her wild spirits, against a Juana who wound the long plaits of her hair about his throat to keep him by her side. The keenest observer would have been sorely puzzled to detect those midnight meetings. It may well be believed that the Italian, sure of his ultimate success, enjoyed prolonging the ineffable pleasure of this intrigue in which he made progress step by step, in fanning the flame that gradually waxed hotter, till everything must yield to it at last.

On the eleventh day, as they sat at dinner, he deemed it expedient to confide to Perez (under the seal of secrecy) the history of the disgrace into which he had fallen among his family. It was a mésalliance, he said.

There was something revolting in this lie, told as a confidence, while that midnight drama was in progress beneath the old man's roof. Montefiore, an experienced actor, was leading up to a catastrophe planned by himself; and, like an artist who loves his art, he enjoyed the thought of it. He meant very shortly to take leave of the house and of his lady-love without regret. And when Juana, risking her life it might be to ask the question, should inquire of Perez what had become of her guest, Perez would tell her, all unwittingly, that "the Marchese di Montefiore had been reconciled with his family; they have consented to receive his wife, and he has taken her to them."

And Juana? . . . The Italian never inquired of himself what would become of her; he had had ample opportunity of knowing her nobleness, her innocence, and her goodness, and felt sure that Juana would keep silence.

He obtained a message to carry for some general or other. Three days afterwards, on the night before he must start, Montefiore went straight to Juana's room instead of going first to his own. The same instinct that bids the tiger leave no morsel of his prey, prompted the Italian to lengthen the night of farewells. Juana, the true daughter of two southern lands, with the passion of Spain and of Italy in her heart, was enraptured by the boldness that brought her lover to

her and revealed the ardor of his love. To know the delicious torment of an illicit passion under the sanction of marriage, to conceal her husband behind the bed-curtains, half deceiving the adopted father and mother, to whom she could say in case of discovery, "I am the Marchesa di Montefiore," was not this a festival for the young and romantic girl who, for three years past, had dreamed of love—love always beset with perils? The curtains of the door fell, drawing about their madness and their happiness a veil which it is useless to raise.

It was nearly nine o'clock, the merchant and his wife were reading the evening prayer, when suddenly the sound of a carriage, drawn by several horses, came from the narrow street without. Some one knocked hastily and loudly at the door of the shop. The servant ran to open it, and in a moment a woman sprang into the quaint old room—a woman magnificently dressed, though her traveling carriage was besplashed by the mire of many roads, for she had crossed Italy and France and Spain. It was La Marana! La Marana, in spite of her thirty-six years and her riotous life, in the full pride of her *beltà folgorante,* to record the superb epithet invented for her in Milan by her enraptured adorers, La Marana, the openly avowed mistress of a King, had left Naples and its festivals and sunny skies, at the very height and summit of her strange career—had left gold and madrigals and silk and perfumes, and her royal lover, when she learned from him what was passing in Spain, and how that Taragona was besieged.

"Taragona!" she cried, "and before the city is taken! I must be in Taragona in ten days!" And without another thought for courts or crowned heads, she had reached Taragona, provided with a passport that gave her something like the powers of an empress, and with gold that enabled her to cross the French empire with the speed and splendor of a rocket. There is no such thing as distance for a mother; she who is a mother, indeed, sees her child, and knows by instinct how he fares though they are as far as the poles apart.

"My daughter? my daughter?" cried La Marana.

At that cry, at this swift invasion of their house, and apparition of a queen traveling *incognito,* Perez and his wife let the prayer-book fall; that voice rang in their ears like a thunder-clap, and La Marana's eyes flashed lightnings.

"She is in there," the merchant answered quietly, after a brief pause, during which they recovered from the shock of surprise caused by La Marana's sudden appearance, and by her look and tone. "She is in there," he said again, indicating the little hiding-place.

"Yes, but has she not been ill? Is she quite——"

"Perfectly well," said Doña Lagounia.

"Oh, God!" cried La Marana, "plunge me now in hell for all eternity, if it be Thy pleasure," and she sank down utterly exhausted into a chair.

The flush that anxiety had brought to her face faded suddenly; her cheeks grew white; she who had borne up bravely under the strain, had no strength left when it was over. The joy was too intolerable, a joy more intense than her previous distress, for she was still vibrating with dread, when bliss keen as anguish came upon her.

"But how have you done?" she asked. "Taragona was taken by assault."

"Yes," answered Perez. "But when you saw that I was alive, how could you ask such a question? How should any one reach Juana but over my dead body?"

The courtesan grasped Perez's horny hand on receiving this answer; tears gathered in her eyes and fell upon his fingers as she kissed them—the costliest of all things under the sun for her, who never wept.

"Brave Perez!" she said at last; "but surely there are soldiers billeted upon you, are there not?"

"Only one," answered the Spaniard. "Luckily, we have one of the most honorable of men, an Italian by nationality, a Spaniard by birth, a hater of Bonaparte, a married man, a steady character. He rises late, and goes to bed early. He is in bad health, too, just now."

"An Italian! What is his name?"

"Captain Montefiore, he——"

"Why, he is not the Marchese di Montefiore, is he?"

"Yes, señora, the very same."

"Has he seen Juana?"

"No," said Doña Lagounia.

"You are mistaken, wife," said Perez. "The Marquis must have seen Juana once, only for a moment, it is true, but I think he must have seen her that day when she came in at supper-time."

"Ah!—I should like to see my daughter."

"Nothing is easier," said Perez. "She is asleep. Though if she has left the key in the lock, we shall have to wake her."

As the merchant rose to take down the duplicate key from its place, he happened to glance up through the tall window. The light from the large round pane-opening of Juana's cell fell upon the dark wall on the opposite side of the yard, tracing a gleaming circle there, and in the midst of the lighted space he saw two shadowy figures such as no sculptor till the time of the gifted Canova could have dreamed of. The Spaniard turned to the room again.

"I do not know," he said to La Marana, "where we have put the key——"

"You look very pale!" she exclaimed.

"I will soon tell you why," he answered, as he sprang towards his dagger, caught it up, and beat violently on the door in the paneling. "Open the door!" he shouted. "Juana! open the door!"

There was an appalling despair in his tones that struck terror into the two women who heard him.

Juana did not open, because there was some delay in hiding Montefiore. She knew nothing of what had passed in the room without. The tapestry hangings on either side of the door deadened all sounds.

"Madame," said Perez, turning to La Marana, "I told you just now that I did not know where the key was. That was a lie. Here it is," and he took it from the sideboard, "but it is

useless. Juana's key is in the lock, and her door is barricaded.—We are deceived, wife! There is a man in Juana's room."

"By my hopes of salvation, the thing is impossible!" said Doña Lagounia.

"Do not perjure yourself, Doña Lagounia. Our honor is slain; and *she*" (he turned to La Marana, who had risen to her feet, and stood motionless as if thunderstruck by his words), "she may well scorn us. She saved our lives, our fortune, and our honor, and we have barely guarded her money for her.—Juana, open the door!" he shouted, "or I will break it down!"

The whole house rang with the cry; his voice grew louder and angrier; but he was cool and self-possessed. He held Montefiore's life in his hands, in another moment he would wash away his remorse in every drop of the Italian's blood.

"Go out! go out! go out! all of you!" cried La Marana, and springing upon the dagger like a tigress, she snatched it from the hands of the astonished Perez. "Go out of this room, Perez," she went on, speaking quite quietly now. "Go out, you and your wife, and the maid and the apprentice. There will be a murder here directly, and you might all be shot down by the French for it. Do not you mix yourself up in it, it is my affair entirely. When my daughter and I meet, God alone should be present. As for the man, he is mine. The whole world should not snatch him out of my hands. There, there, go! I forgive you. I see it all. The girl is a Marana. My blood flows in her veins, and you, your religion, and your honor have been powerless against it."

Her groan was dreadful to hear. She turned dry eyes upon them. She had lost everything, but she was accustomed to suffering; she was a courtesan. The door opened. La Marana henceforth heeded nothing else, and Perez, making a sign to his wife, could remain at his post. The old Spaniard, implacable where honor was concerned, determined to assist the wronged mother's vengeance. Juana, in her white draperies, stood quietly there in her room in the soft lamplight. "What do you want with me?" she asked.

In spite of herself, a light shudder ran through La Marana.

"Perez," she asked, "is there any other way out of this closet?"

Perez shook his head; and on that the courtesan went into the room.

"Juana," she said, "I am your mother, your judge—you have put yourself in the one situation in which I can reveal myself to you. You have come to my level, you whom I had thought to raise to heaven. Oh! you have fallen very low! . . . You have a lover in your room."

"Madame, no one but my husband should or could be there," she answered. "I am the Marchesa di Montefiore."

"Then are there two of them?" asked old Perez sternly. "He told me that he was married."

"Montefiore! my love!" cried the girl, rending the curtains, and discovering the officer; "come forward, these people are slandering you."

The Italian's face was haggard and pale; he saw the dagger in La Marana's hand, and he knew La Marana. At one bound he sprang out of the chamber, and with a voice of thunder shouted, "Help! help! murder! they are killing a Frenchman!—Soldiers of the Sixth of the line, run for Captain Diard! . . . Help!"

Perez had secured the Marquis, and was about to gag him by putting his large hand over the soldier's mouth, when the courtesan stopped him.

"Hold him fast," she said, "but let him call. Throw open the doors, and leave them open; and now go out, all of you, I tell you!—As for you," she continued, addressing Montefiore, "shout, and call for help. . . . As soon as there is a sound of your men's footsteps, this blade will be in your heart. . . . Are you married? Answer me."

Montefiore, lying across the threshold of the door, two paces from Juana, heard nothing, and saw nothing, for the blinding gleam of the dagger blade.

"Then he meant to deceive me;" the words came slowly from Juana. "He told me that he was free."

"He told me that he was a married man," said Perez, in the same stern tones as before.

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Doña Lagounia. La Marana stooped to mutter in the ear of the Marquis, "Answer me, will you, soul of mud?"

"Your daughter . . ." Montefiore began.

"The daughter I once had is dead, or she soon will be," said La Marana. "I have no daughter now. Do not use that word again. Answer me, are you married?"

"No, madame," Montefiore said at last (he wished to gain time); "I mean to marry your daughter."

"My noble Montefiore!" cried Juana, with a deep breath.

"Then what made you fly and call for help?" demanded Perez.

Terrible perspicacity!

Juana said nothing, but she wrung her hands, went over to her armchair, and sat down. Even at that moment there was an uproar in the street, and in the deep silence that fell upon the parlor it was sufficiently easy to catch sounds. A private soldier of the Sixth, who had chanced to pass along the street when Montefiore cried out for help, had gone to call up Diard. Luckily, the quartermaster was in his lodging, and came at once with several comrades.

"Why did I fly?" repeated Montefiore, who heard the sound of his friend's voice. "Because I had told you the truth.—Diard! Diard!" he shrieked aloud.

But at a word from Perez, who meant that all in his house should share in the murder, the apprentice made the door fast, and the men were obliged to force it open. La Marana, therefore, could stab the guilty creature at her feet before they made an entrance; but her hand shook with pent-up wrath, and the blade slipped aside upon Montefiore's epaulette. Yet so heavy had been the blow, that the Italian rolled over almost at Juana's feet. The girl did not see him, but La Marana sprang upon her prey, and, lest she should fail this time, she held his throat in an iron grasp, and pointed the dagger at his heart.

"I am free!" he gasped. "I will marry her! I swear it by God! by my mother! by all that is most sacred in this world. . . . I am not married! I will marry her! Upon my word of honor, I will!" and he set his teeth in the courtesan's arm.

"That is enough, mother," said Juana; "kill him! I would not have such a coward for my husband if he were ten times more beautiful."

"Ah! that is my daughter!" cried La Marana.

"What is going on here?" asked the quartermaster, looking about him.

"This," shouted Montefiore; "they are murdering me on that girl's account; she says that I am her lover; she trapped me, and now they want to force me to marry her against my will——"

"Against your will?" cried Diard, struck with the sublime beauty that indignation, scorn, and hate had lent to Juana's face, already so fair. "You are very hard to please! If she must have a husband, here am I. Put up your dagger."

La Marana grasped the Italian, pulled him to his feet, brought him to the bedside, and said in his ear:

"If I spare your life, you may thank that last speech of yours for it. But keep it in mind. If you say a word against my daughter, we shall see each other again—What will her dowry amount to?" she asked of Perez.

"Two hundred thousand piastres down——"

"That will not be all, monsieur," said the courtesan, addressing Diard. "Who are you?—You can go," she added, turning to Montefiore.

But when the Marquis heard mention of two hundred thousand piastres down, he came forward, saying, "I am really quite free——"

"You are really quite free to go," said La Marana, and the Italian went.

"Alas! monsieur," the girl spoke, addressing Diard; "I thank you, and I admire you. But my bridegroom is in

heaven; I shall be the bride of Christ. To-morrow I shall enter the convent of——"

"Oh, hush! hush! Juana, my Juana!" cried her mother, holding the girl tightly in her arms. Then she whispered, "You must take another bridegroom."

Juana turned pale.

"Who are you, monsieur?" asked the mother of the Provençal.

"I am nothing as yet but a quartermaster in the Sixth Regiment of the line," said he; "but for such a wife, a man would feel that it lay in him to be a Marshal of France some day. My name is Pierre-François Diard. My father was a guild magistrate, so I am not a——"

"Eh! you are an honest man, are you not?" cried La Marana. "If the Signorina Juana dei Mancini cares for you, you may both be happy.—Juana," she went on gravely, "when you are the wife of a good and worthy man, remember that you will be a mother. I have sworn that you shall set a kiss upon your child's forehead without a blush . . . (Here her tone changed somewhat.) I have sworn that you shall be a virtuous wife. So in this life, though many troubles await you, whatever happens to you, be a chaste and faithful wife to your husband; sacrifice everything to him; he will be the father of your children. . . . A father to your children! . . . Stay, between you and a lover your mother always will stand; I shall be your mother only when danger threatens. . . . Do you see Perez's dagger? *That* is part of your dower," and she flung the weapon down on the bed. "There I leave it as a guarantee of your honor, so long as I have eyes to see and hands that can strike a blow. —Farewell," she said, keeping back the tears; "heaven send that we never meet again," and at that her tears flowed fast.

"Poor child! you have been very happy in this little cell, happier than you know.—Act in such a sort that she may never look back on it with regret," she added, looking at her future son-in-law.

The story, which has been given simply by way of introduction, is not by any means the subject of the following study; it has been told to explain, in the first place, how Montefiore and Diard became acquainted, how Captain Diard came to marry Juana dei Mancini, and to make known what passions filled Mme. Diard's heart, what blood flowed in her veins.

By the time that the quartermaster had been through the slow and tedious formalities indispensable for a French soldier who is obtaining leave to marry, he had fallen passionately in love with Juana dei Mancini, and Juana dei Mancini had had time to reflect on her fate. An appalling fate! Juana, who neither loved nor esteemed this Diard, was none the less bound to him by a promise, a rash promise no doubt, but there had been no help for it. The Provençal was neither handsome nor well made. His manners were totally lacking in distinction, and savored of the camp, of his provincial bringing up and imperfect education. How should the young girl love Diard? With her perfect elegance and grace, her unconquerable instinct for luxury and refinement, her natural drawings were towards the higher spheres of society; and as for esteem, she could not bring herself to feel so much as esteem for this Diard who was to marry her, and precisely for that very reason.

The repugnance was very natural. Woman is a sacred and gracious being, almost always misunderstood; the judgments passed upon her are almost always unjust, because she is not understood. If Juana had loved Diard, she would have esteemed him. Love creates a new self within a woman; the old self passes away with the dawn of love, and in the wedding-robe of a passion that shall last as long as life itself, her life is invested with whiteness and purity. After this new birth, this revival of modesty and virtue, she has no longer a past; it is utterly forgotten; she turns wholly to the future that she may learn all things afresh. In this sense, the words of the famous line that a modern poet has put into the

mouth of Marion Delorme, a line moreover that Corneille might well have written, are steeped in truth:

> And Love gives back my maidenhood to me.

Does it not read like a reminiscence of some tragedy of Corneille's? The style of the father of French drama, so forceful, owing so little to epithet, seems to be revived again in the words. And yet the writer, the poet of our own day, has been compelled to sacrifice it to the taste of a public only capable of appreciating vaudevilles.

So Juana, loveless, was still the same Juana, betrayed, humiliated, brought very low. How should this Juana respect a man who could take her thus? With the high-minded purity of youth, she felt the force of a distinction, subtle in appearance, but real and immutable, a binding law upon the heart, which even the least thoughtful women instinctively apply to all their sentiments. Life had opened out before Juana, and the prospect saddened her inmost soul.

Often she looked at Perez and Doña Lagounia, her eyes full of the tears she was too proud to let fall; they understood the bitter thoughts contained in those tears, but they said no word. Were not reproaches useless? And why should they seek to comfort her? The keener the sympathy, the wider the pent-up sorrow would spread.

One evening, as Juana sat in her little cell in a dull stupor of wretchedness, she heard the husband and wife talking together. They thought that the door was shut, and a wail broke from her adopted mother.

"The poor child will die of grief!"

"Yes," answered Perez in a faltering voice; "but what can we do? Can I go now to boast of my ward's chaste beauty to the Comte d'Arcos, to whom I hoped to marry her?"

"There is a difference between one slip and vice," said the old woman, indulgent as an angel could have been.

"Her mother gave her to him," objected Perez.

"All in a minute, and without consulting her!" cried Doña Lagounia.

"She knew quite well what she was doing——"

"Into what hands our pearl will pass!"

"Not a word more, or I will go and pick a quarrel with that —— Diard!"

"And then there would be one more misfortune."

Juana, listening to these terrible words, knew at last the value of the happy life that had flowed on untroubled until her error ended it. So the innocent hours in her peaceful retreat were to have been crowned by a brilliant and splendid existence; the delights so often dreamed of would have been hers. Those dreams had caused her ruin. She had fallen from the heights of social greatness to the feet of *Monsieur* Diard! Juana wept; her thoughts almost drove her mad. For several seconds she hesitated between a life of vice and religion. Vice offered a prompt solution; religion, a life made up of suffering. The inward debate was stormy and solemn. To-morrow was the fatal day, the day fixed for this marriage. It was not too late; Juana might be Juana still. If she remained free, she knew the utmost extent of her calamities; but when married, she could not tell what might lie in store for her. Religion gained the day. Doña Lagounia came to watch and pray by her daughter's side, as she might have done by a dying woman's bed.

"It is the will of God," she said to Juana. Nature gives to a woman a power peculiarly her own, that enables her to endure suffering, a power succeeded in turn by weakness that counsels resignation. Juana submitted without an afterthought. She determined to fulfil her mother's vow, to cross the desert of life, and so reach heaven, knowing that no flowers could spring in the thorny paths that lay before her. She married Diard.

As for the quartermaster, though Juana judged him pitilessly, who else would not have forgiven him? He was intoxicated with love. La Marana, with the quick instinct

natural to her, had felt passion in the tones of his voice, and seen in him the abrupt temper, the impulsive generosity of the South. In the paroxysm of her great anger, she had seen Diard's good qualities, and these only, and thought that these were sufficient guarantees for her daughter's happiness.

And to all appearance the early days of this marriage were happy. But to lay bare the underlying facts of the case, the miserable secrets that women bury in the depths of their souls, Juana had determined that she would not overcloud her husband's joy. All women who are victims of an ill-assorted marriage, come sooner or later to play a double part—a part terrible to play, and Juana had already taken up her rôle. Of such a life, a man can only record the facts; and women's hearts alone can divine the inner life of sentiments. Is it not a story impossible to relate in all its truth? Juana, struggling every hour against her own nature, half Spanish, half Italian; Juana, shedding tears in secret till she had no tears left to shed, was a typical creation, a living symbol, destined to represent the uttermost extent of woman's misfortunes. The minute detail required to depict that life of restless pain would be without interest for those who crave melodramatic sensation. And would not an analysis, in which every wife would discover some of her own experience, require an entire volume if it were to be given in full? Such a book, by its very nature, would be impossible to write, for its merits must consist in half-tones and in subtle shades of color that critics would consider vague and indistinct. And besides, who that does not bear another heart within his heart can touch on the pathetic, deeply-hidden tragedies that some women take with them to their graves; the heartache, understood of none—not even of those who cause it; the sighs in vain; the devotion that, here on earth at least, meets with no return; unappreciated magnanimities of silence and scorn of vengeance; unfailing generosity, lavished in vain; longings for happiness destined to be unfulfilled; angelic charity that blesses in secret; all the beliefs held sacred, all

the inextinguishable love? This life Juana knew; fate spared her in nothing. Hers was to be in all things the lot of a wronged and unhappy wife, always forgiving her wrongs; a woman pure as a flawless diamond, though through her beauty, as flawless and as dazzling as the diamond, a way of revenge lay open to her. Of a truth, she need not dread the dagger in her dower.

But at first, under the influence of love, of a passion that for awhile at least can work a change in the most depraved nature, and bring to light all that is noblest in a human soul, Diard behaved like a man of honor. He compelled Montefiore to go out of the regiment, and even out of that division of the army, that his wife might not be compelled to meet the Marquis during the short time that she was to remain in Spain. Then the quartermaster asked to change his regiment, and managed to exchange into the Imperial Guard. He meant at all costs to gain a title; he would have honors and a great position to match his great fortune. With this thought in his mind, he displayed great courage in one of our bloodiest battles in Germany, and was so badly wounded that he could no longer stay in the service. For a time it was feared that he might have to lose his leg, and he was forced to retire, with his pension indeed, but without the title of baron or any of the rewards which he had hoped for, and very likely would have won, if his name had not been Diard.

These events, together with his wound and his disappointed hopes, made a changed man of the late quartermaster. The Provençal's energy, wrought for a time to a fever pitch, suddenly deserted him. At first, however, his wife sustained his courage; his efforts, his bravery, and his ambition had given her some belief in her husband; and surely it behooved her, of all women, to play a woman's part, to be a tender consoler for the troubles of life.

Juana's words put fresh heart into the Major. He went to live in Paris, determined to make a high position for himself in the Administration; the quartermaster of the Sixth

Line Regiment should be forgotten, and some day Madame Diard should wear a splendid title. His passion for his charming wife had made him quick to guess her inmost wishes. Juana did not speak of them, but he understood her; he was not loved as a man dreams of being loved—he knew it, and longed to be looked up to and loved and caressed. The luckless man anticipated happiness with a wife who was at all times so submissive and so gentle; but her gentleness and her submission meant nothing but that resignation to her fate which had given Juana to him. Resignation and religion, were these love? Diard could often have wished for a refusal instead of that wifely obedience; often he would have given his soul if Juana would but have deigned to weep upon his breast, and ceased to conceal her feelings with the smile that she wore proudly as a mask upon her face.

Many a man in his youth (for after a certain time we give up struggling) strives to triumph over an evil destiny that brings the thunder-clouds from time to time above the horizon of his life; and when he falls into the depths of misfortune, those unrequited struggles should be taken into account. Like many another, Diard tried all ways, and found all ways barred against him. His wealth enabled him to surround his wife with all the luxuries that can be enjoyed in Paris. She had a great mansion and vast drawing-rooms, and presided over one of those houses frequented by some few artists who are uncritical by nature, by a great many schemers, by the frivolous folk who are ready to go anywhere to be amused, and by certain men of fashion, attracted by Juana's beauty. Those who make themselves conspicuous in Paris must either conquer Paris or fall victims. Diard's character was not strong enough, nor compact enough, nor persistent enough, to impress itself upon the society of a time when every one else was likewise bent upon reaching a high position. Ready-made social classifications are not improbably a great blessing, even for the people. Napoleon's *Memoirs* have informed us of the pains he was at to impose social conventions upon a Court composed for the most part

of subjects who had once been his equals. But Napoleon was a Corsican, Diard was a Provençal.

If the two men had been mentally equal—an islander is always a more complete human being than a man born and bred on the mainland; and though Provence and Corsica lie between the same degrees of latitude, the narrow stretch of sea that keeps them apart is, in spite of man's inventions, a whole ocean that makes two different countries of them both.

From this false position, which Diard falsified yet further, grave misfortunes arose. Perhaps there is a useful lesson to be learned by tracing the chain of independent facts that imperceptibly brought about the catastrophe of the story.

In the first place, Parisian scoffers could not see the pictures that adorned the late quartermaster's mansion without a significant smile. The recently purchased masterpieces were all condemned by the unspoken slur cast upon the pictures that had been the spoils of war in Spain; by this slur, self-love avenged itself for the involuntary offence of Diard's wealth. Juana understood the meaning of some of the ambiguous compliments in which the French excel. Acting upon her advice, therefore, her husband sent the Spanish pictures back to Taragona. But the world of Paris, determined to put the worst construction on the matter, said, "That fellow Diard is shrewd; he has sold his pictures," and the good folk continued to believe that the paintings which still hung on the walls had not been honestly come by. Then some ill-natured women inquired how a *Diard* had come to marry a young wife so rich and so beautiful. Comments followed, endless absurdities were retailed, after the manner of Paris. If Juana rose above it all, even above the scandal, and met with nothing but the respect due to her pure and devout life, that respect ended with her, and was not accorded to her husband. Her shining eyes glanced over her rooms, and her woman's clear-sightedness brought her nothing but pain. And yet—the disparagement was quite explicable. Military men, for all the virtues with which romance endows

them, could not forgive the quondam quartermaster for his wealth and his determination to cut a figure in Paris, and for that very reason.

There is a world in Paris that lies between the furthest house in the Faubourg Saint-Germain on the one hand, and the last mansion in the Rue Saint-Lazare on the other; between the rising ground of the Luxembourg and the heights of Montmartre; a world that dresses and gossips, dresses to go out, and goes out to gossip; a world of petty and great airs; a world of mean and poor ambitions, masquerading in insolence; a world of envy and of fawning arts. It is made up of gilded rank, and rank that has lost its gilding, of young and old, of nobility of the fourth century and titles of yesterday, of those who laugh at the expense of a *parvenu,* and others who fear to be contaminated by him, of men eager for the downfall of a power, though none the less they will bow the knee to it if it holds its own; and all these ears hear, and all these tongues repeat, and all these minds are informed in the course of an evening of the birth-place, education, and previous history of each new aspirant for its high places. If there is no High Court of Justice in this exalted sphere, it boasts the most ruthless of *procureurs-généraux,* an intangible public opinion that dooms the victim and carries out the sentence, that accuses and brands the delinquent. Do not hope to hide anything from this tribunal, tell everything at once yourself, for it is determined to go to the bottom of everything, and knows everything. Do not seek to understand the mysterious operation by which intelligence is flashed from place to place, so that a story, a scandal, or a piece of news is known everywhere simultaneously in the twinkling of an eye. Do not ask who set the machinery in motion; it is a social mystery, no observer can do more than watch its phenomena, and its working is rapid beyond belief. A single example shall suffice. The murder of the Duc de Berri, at the Opéra, was known in the furthest part of the Ile Saint-Louis ten minutes after the crime was committed. The opinion of the Sixth Regiment of the Line concerning

Diard permeated this world of Paris on the very evening of his first ball.

So Diard himself could accomplish nothing. Henceforward his wife, and his wife alone, might make a way for him. Strange portent of a strange civilization! If a man can do nothing by himself in Paris, he has still some chance of rising in the world if his wife is young and clever. There are women, weak to all appearance, invalids who, without rising from their sofas or leaving their rooms, make their influence felt in society; and by bringing countless secret springs into play, gain for their husbands the position which their own vanity desires. But Juana, whose girlhood had been spent in the quaint simplicity of the narrow house in Taragona, knew nothing of the corruption, the baseness, or the opportunities afforded by life in Paris; she looked out upon it with girlish curiosity, and learned from it no worldly wisdom save the lessons taught her by her wounded pride and susceptibilities. Juana, moreover, possessed the quick instinct of a maiden heart, and was as swift to anticipate an impression as a sensitive plant. The lonely girl had become a woman all at once. She saw that if she endeavored to compel society to honor her husband, it must be after the Spanish fashion, of telling a lie, carbine in hand. Did not her own constant watchfulness tell her how necessary her manifold precautions were? A gulf yawned for Diard between the failure to make himself respected and the opposite danger of being respected but too much. Then as suddenly as before, when she had foreseen her life, there came a revelation of the world to her; she beheld on all sides the vast extent of an irreparable misfortune. Then came the tardy recognition of her husband's peculiar weaknesses, his total unfitness to play the parts he had assigned to himself, the incoherency of his ideas, the mental incapacity to grasp this society as a whole, or to comprehend the subtleties that are all-important there. Would not tact effect more for a man in his position than force of character? But the tact that never fails is perhaps the greatest of all forces.

So far from effacing the blot upon the Diard scutcheon, the Major was at no little pains to make matters worse. For instance, as it had not occurred to him that the Empire was passing through a phase that required careful study, he tried, though he was only a major, to obtain an appointment as prefect. At that time almost every one believed in Napoleon; his favor had increased the importance of every post. The prefectures, those empires on a small scale, could only be filled by men with great names, by the gentlemen of the household of His Majesty the Emperor and King. The prefects by this time were Grand Viziers. These minions of the great man laughed at Major Diard's artless ambitions, and he was fain to solicit a sub-prefecture. His modest pretentions were ludicrously disproportioned to his vast wealth. After this ostentatious display of luxury, how could the millionaire leave the royal splendors of his house in Paris for Issoudun or Savenay? Would it not be a descent unworthy of his fortunes? Juana, who all too late had come to understand our laws, and the manners and customs of our administration, too late enlightened her husband. Diard, in his desperation, went begging to all the powers that be; but Diard met with nothing but rebuffs, no way was open to him. Then people judged him as the Government had judged him, and passed his own verdict upon himself. Diard had been badly wounded on the field of battle, and Diard had not been decorated. The quartermaster, who had gained wealth, but no esteem, found no place under the government, and society quite logically refused him the social position to which he had aspired. In short, in his own house the unfortunate man continually felt that his wife was his superior. He had come to feel it in spite of the "velvet glove" (if the metaphor is not too bold) that disguised from her husband the supremacy that astonished her herself, while she felt humiliated by it. It produced its effect upon Diard at last.

A man who plays a losing game like this is bound to lose heart, and to grow either a greater or a worse man for it; Diard's courage, or his passion, was sure to diminish, after

repeated blows dealt to his self-love, and he made mistake upon mistake. From the first everything had been against him, even his own habits and his own character. The vices and virtues of the impulsive Provençal were equally patent. The fibres of his nature were like harp-strings, and every old friend had a place in his heart. He was as prompt to relieve a comrade in abject poverty as the distress of another of high rank; in short, he never forgot a friend, and filled his gilded rooms with poor wretches down on their luck. Beholding which things, the general of the old stamp (a species that will soon be extinct) was apt to greet Diard in an offhand fashion, and address him with a patronizing, "Well, my dear fellow!" when they met. If the generals of the Empire concealed their insolence beneath an assumption of a soldier's bluff familiarity, the few people of fashion whom Diard met showed him the polite and well-bred contempt against which a self-made man is nearly always powerless. Diard's behavior and speech, like his half-Italian accent, his dress, and everything about him, combined to lower him in the eyes of ordinary minds; for the unwritten code of good manners and good taste is a binding tradition that only the greatest power can shake off. Such is the way of the world.

These details give a very imperfect idea of Juana's martyrdom. The pangs were endured one by one. Every social species contributed its pin-prick, and hers was a soul that would have welcomed dagger-thrusts in preference. It was intolerably painful to watch Diard receiving insults that he did not feel, insults that Juana must feel, though they were not meant for her. A final and dreadful illumination came at last for her; it cast a light upon the future, and she knew all the sorrows that it held in store. She had seen already that her husband was quite incapable of mounting to the highest rungs of the social ladder, but now she saw the inevitable depths to which he must fall when he should lose heart; and then a feeling of pity for Diard came over her.

The future that lay before her was very dark. Juana had never ceased to feel an overhanging dread of some evil,

though whence it should come she knew not. This presentiment haunted her inmost soul, as contagion hovers in the air; but she was able to hide her anguish with smiles. She had reached the point when she no longer thought of herself.

Juana used her influence to persuade Diard to renounce his social ambitions, pointing out to him as a refuge the peaceful and gracious life of the domestic hearth. All their troubles came from without; why should they not shut out the world? In his own home Diard would find peace and respect; he should reign there. She felt that she had courage enough to undertake the trying task of making him happy, this man dissatisfied with himself. Her energy had increased with the difficulties of her life; she had within her the heroic spirit needed by a woman in her position, and felt the stirrings of those religious aspirations which are cherished by the guardian angel appointed to watch over a Christian soul, for this poetic superstitious fancy is an allegory that expresses the idea of the two natures within us.

Diard renounced his ambitions, closed his house, and literally shut himself up in it, if it is allowable to make use of so familiar a phrase. But therein lay the danger. Diard was one of those centrifugal souls who must always be moving about. The luckless soldier's turn of mind was such that no sooner had he arrived in a place than this reckless instinct forthwith drove him to depart. Natures of this kind have but one end in life; they must come and go unceasingly like the wheels spoken of in the Scriptures. It may have been that Daird would fain have escaped from himself. He was not weary of Juana; she had given him no cause to blame her, but with possession his passion for her had grown less absorbing, and his character asserted itself again.

Thenceforward his moments of despondency came more frequently; he gave way more often to his quick southern temper. The more virtuous and irreproachable a woman is, the more a man delights to find her in fault, if only to demonstrate his titular superiority; but if by chance she compels his respect, he must needs fabricate faults, and so

between the husband and wife nothings are exaggerated, and trifles become mountains. But Juana's meek patience and gentleness, untinged with the bitterness that women can infuse into their submission, gave no handle to this fault-finding of set purpose, the most unkind of all. Hers was, moreover, one of those noble natures for whom it is impossible to fail in duty; her pure and holy life shone in those eyes with the martyr's expression in them that haunted the imagination. Diard first grew weary, then he chafed, and ended by finding this lofty virtue an intolerable yoke. His wife's discretion left him no room for violent sensations, and he craved excitement. Thousands of such dramas lie hidden away in the souls of men and women, beneath the uninteresting surface of apparently simple and commonplace lives. It is difficult to choose an example from among the many scenes that last for so short a time, and leave such ineffaceable traces in a life; scenes that are almost always precursors of the calamity that is written in the destiny of most marriages. Still one scene may be described, because it sharply marks the first beginnings of a misunderstanding between these two, and may in some degree explain the catastrophe of the story.

Juana had two children; luckily for her, they were both boys. The oldest was born seven months after her marriage; he was named Juan, and was like his mother. Two years after they came to Paris her second son was born; he resembled Diard and Juana, but he was more like Diard, whose names he bore. Juana had given the most tender care to little Francisco. For the five years of his life, his mother was absorbed in this child; he had more than his share of kisses and caresses and playthings; and besides and beyond all this, his mother's penetrating eyes watched him continually. Juana studied his character even in the cradle, noticing heedfully his cries and movements, that she might direct his education. Juana seemed to have but that one child. The Provençal, seeing that Juan was almost neglected, began to take notice of the older boy. He would not ask

himself whether the little one was the offspring of the short-lived love affair to which he owed Juana, and by a piece of rare flattery made of Juan his Benjamin. Of all the race inheritance of passions which preyed upon her, Mme. Diard gave way but to one—a mother's love; she loved her children with the same vehemence and intensity that La Marana had shown for her child in the first part of this story; but to this love she added a gracious delicacy of feeling, a quick and keen comprehension of the social virtues that it had been her pride to practise, in which she had found her recompense. The secret thought of the conscientious fulfilment of the duties of motherhood had been a crude element of poetry that left its impress on La Marana's life; but Juana could be a mother openly, it was her hourly consolation. Her own mother had been virtuous as other women are criminal, by stealth; she had stolen her illicit happiness, she had not known all the sweetness of secure possession. But Juana, whose life of virtue was as dreary as her mother's life of sin, knew every hour the ineffable joys for which that mother had longed in vain. For her, as for La Marana, motherhood summed up all earthly affection, and both the Maranas from opposite causes had but this one comfort in their desolation. Perhaps Juana's love was the stronger, because, shut out from all other love, her children became all in all to her, and because a noble passion has this in common with vice: it grows by what it feeds upon. The mother and the gambler are alike insatiable.

Juana was touched by the generous pardon extended over Juan's head by Diard's fatherly affection, and thenceforward the relations between husband and wife were changed; the interest which Diard's Spanish wife had taken in him from a sense of duty only, became a deep and sincere feeling. Had he been less inconsequent in his life, if fickleness and spasmodic changes of feeling on his part had not quenched that flicker of timid but real sympathy, Juana must surely have loved him; but, unluckily, Diard's character belonged to the quick-witted southern type, that has no continuity in

its ideas; such men will be capable of heroic actions overnight, and sink into nonentities on the morrow; often they are made to suffer for their virtues, often their worst defects contribute to their success; and for the rest, they are great when their good qualities are pressed into the service of an unflagging will. For two years Diard had been a prisoner in his home, a prisoner bound by the sweetest of all chains. He lived, almost against his will, beneath the influence of a wife who kept him amused, and was always bright and cheerful for him, a wife who devoted all her powers of coquetry to beguiling him into the ways of virtue; and yet all her ingenuity could not deceive him, and he knew this was not love.

Just about that time a murder caused a great sensation in Paris. A captain of the armies of the Republic had killed a woman in a paroxysm of debauchery. Diard told the story to Juana when he came home to dine. The officer, he said, had taken his own life to avoid the ignominy of a trial and the infamous death of a criminal. At first Juana could not understand the reason for his conduct, and her husband was obliged to explain to her the admirable provision of the French law, which takes no proceedings against the dead.

"But, papa, didn't you tell us the other day that the King can pardon anybody?" asked Francisco.

"The King can only grant *life*," said Juan, nettled.

Diard and Juana watched this little scene with very different feelings. The tears of happiness in Juana's eyes as she glanced at her oldest boy let her husband see with fatal clearness into the real secrets of that hitherto inscrutable heart. Her older boy was Juana's own child; Juana knew his nature; she was sure of him and of his future; she worshiped him, and her great love was a secret known only to her child and to God. Juan, in his secret heart, gladly endured his mother's sharp speeches. What if she seemed to frown upon him in the presence of his father and brother, when she showered passionate kisses upon him when they were alone? Francisco was Diard's child, and Juana's care

meant that she wished to check the growth of his father's faults in him, and to develop his good qualities.

Juana, unconscious that she had spoken too plainly in that glance, took little Francisco on her knee; and, her sweet voice faltering somewhat with the gladness that Juan's answer had caused her, gave the younger boy the teaching suited to his childish mind.

"His training requires great care," the father said, speaking to Juana.

"But *Juan!*"

The tone in which the two words were uttered startled Mme. Diard. She looked up at her husband.

"Juan was born perfection," he added, and having thus delivered himself, he sat down, and looked gloomily at his wife. She was silent, so he went on, "You love one of *your* children more than the other."

"You know it quite well," she said.

"No!" returned Diard. "Until this moment I did not know which of them you loved the most."

"But neither of them has as yet caused me any sorrow," she answered quickly.

"No, but which of them has given you more joys?" he asked still more quickly.

"I have not kept any reckoning of them."

"Women are very deceitful!" cried Diard. "Do you dare to tell me that Juan is not the darling of your heart?"

"And if he were," she said, with gentle dignity, "do you mean that it would be a misfortune?"

"You have never loved me! If you had chosen, I might have won kingdoms for you with my sword. You know all that I have tried to do, sustained by one thought—a longing that you might care for me. Ah! if you had but loved me——"

"A woman who loves," said Juana, "lives in solitude far from the world. Is not that what we are doing?"

"Oh! I know, Juana, that you are never in the wrong."

The words, spoken with such intense bitterness, brought about a coldness between them that lasted the rest of their lives.

On the morrow of that fatal day, Diard sought out one of his old cronies, and with him sought distraction at the gaming-table. Unluckily, he won a great deal of money, and he began to play regularly. Little by little he slipped back into his old dissipated life. After a short time he no longer dined at home. A few months were spent in the enjoyment of the first pleasures of freedom; he made up his mind that he would not part with it, left the large apartments of the house to his wife, and took up his abode separately on the *entresol*. By the end of the year Diard and Juana only met once a day—at breakfast time.

In a few words, like all gamblers, he had runs of good and bad luck; but as he was reluctant to touch his capital, he wished to have entire control of their income, and his wife accordingly ceased to take any part in the management of the household economy. Mistrust had succeeded to the boundless confidence that he had once placed in her. As to money matters, which had formerly been arranged by both husband and wife, he adopted the plan of a monthly allowance for her own expenses; they settled the amount of it together in the last of the confidential talks that form one of the most attractive charms of marriage.

The barrier of silence between two hearts is a real divorce, accomplished on the day when husband and wife say *we* no longer. When that day came, Juana knew that she was no longer a wife, but a mother; she was not unhappy, and did not seek to guess the reason of the misfortune. It was a great pity. Children consolidate, as it were, the lives of their parents, and the life that her husband led apart was to weave sadness and anguish for others as well as for Juana. Diard lost no time in making use of his newly regained liberty; he played high, and lost and won enormous sums. He was a good and bold player, and gained a great reputation. The respect which he had failed to win in society in

the days of the Empire was accorded now to the wealth that was risked upon a green table, to a talent for all and any of the games of chance of that period. Ambassadors, financiers, men with large fortunes, jaded pleasure-seekers in quest of excitement and extreme sensations, admired Daird's play at their clubs; they rarely asked him to their houses, but they all played with him. Diard became the fashion. Once or twice during the winter his independent spirit led him to give a fête to return the courtesies that he had received, and by glimpses Juana saw something of society again; there was a brief return of balls and banquets, of luxury and brilliantly-lighted rooms; but all these things she regarded as a sort of duty levied upon her happiness and solitude.

The queen of these high festivals appeared in them like some creature fallen from an unknown world. Her simplicity that nothing had spoiled, a certain maidenliness of soul with which the changed conditions of her life had invested her, her beauty, her unaffected modesty, won sincere admiration. But Juana saw few women among her guests; and it was plain to her mind that if her husband had ordered his life differently without taking her into his confidence, he had not risen in the esteem of the world.

Diard was not always lucky. In three years he had squandered three-fourths of his fortune; but he drew from his passion for gambling sufficient energy to satisfy it. He had a large circle of acquaintance, and was hand-and-glove with certain swindlers on the Stock Exchange—gentry who, since the Revolution, have established the principle that robbery on a large scale is a mere *peccadillo,* transferring to the language of the counting-house the brazen epithets of the license of the eighteenth century.

Diard became a speculator, engaged in the peculiar kinds of business described as "shady" in the slang of the Palais. He managed to get hold of poor wretches ignorant of commercial red-tape, and weary of everlasting proceedings in liquidation; he would buy up their claims on the debtor's

estate for a small sum, arrange the matter with the assignees in the course of an evening, and divide the spoil with the latter. When liquefiable debts were not to be found, he looked out for floating debts; he unearthed and revived claims in abeyance in Europe and America and uncivilized countries. When at the Restoration the debts incurred by the princes, the Republic, and the Empire were all paid, he took commissions on loans, on contracts for public works and enterprises of all kinds. In short, he committed legal robbery, like many another carefully masked delinquent behind the scenes in the theatre of politics. Such thefts, if perpetrated by the light of a street lamp, would send the luckless offender to the hulks; but there is a virtue in the glitter of chandeliers and gilded ceilings that absolves the crimes committed beneath them.

Diard forestalled and regrated sugars; he sold places; to him belongs the credit of the invention of the *warming-pan;* he installed lay-figures in lucrative posts that must be held for a time to secure still better positions. Then he fell to meditating on bounties; he studied the loop-holes of the law, and carried on contraband trades against which no provision had been made. This traffic in high places may be briefly described as a sort of commission agency; he received "so much per cent" on the purchase of fifteen votes which passed in a single night from the benches on the left to the benches on the right of the legislative chamber. In these days such things are neither misdemeanors nor felony; exploiting industry, the art of government, financial genius—these are the names by which they are called.

Public opinion put Diard in the pillory, where more than one clever man stood already to keep him company; there, indeed, you will find the aristocracy of this kind of talent—the Upper Chamber of civilized rascality.

Diard, therefore, was no commonplace gambler, no vulgar spendthrift who ends his career, in melodramas, as a beggar. Above a certain social altitude that kind of gambler is not to be found. In these days a bold scoundrel of this kind will

die gloriously in the harness of vice in all the trappings of success: he will blow out his brains in a coach and six, and all that has been intrusted to him vanishes with him. Diard's talent determined him not to buy remorse too cheaply, and he joined this privileged class. He learned all the springs of government, made himself acquainted with all the secrets and the weaknesses of men in office, and held his own in the fiery furnace into which he had cast himself.

Mme. Diard knew nothing of the infernal life that her husband led. She was well content to be neglected, and did not ponder overmuch the reasons for his neglect. Her time was too well filled. She devoted all the money that she had to the education of her children; a very clever tutor was engaged for them, besides various masters. She meant to make men of her boys, to develop in them the faculty of reasoning clearly, but not at the expense of their imaginative powers. Nothing affected her now save through her children, and her own colorless life depressed her no longer. Juan and Francisco were for her what children are for a time for many mothers—a sort of expansion of her own existence. Diard had come to be a mere accident in her life. Since Diard had ceased to be a father and the head of the family, nothing bound Juana to her husband any longer, save a regard for appearances demanded by social conventions; yet she brought up her children to respect their father, shadowy and unreal as that fatherhood had become; indeed, her husband's continual absence from home helped her to maintain the fiction of his high character. If Diard had lived in the house, all Juana's efforts must have been in vain. Her children were too quick and bright not to judge their father, and this process is a moral parricide.

At length, however, Juana's indifference changed to a feeling of dread. She felt that sooner or later her husband's manner of life must affect the children's future. Day by day that old presentiment of coming evil gathered definiteness and strength. On the rare occasions when Juana saw her husband, she would glance at his hollow cheeks, at his face

grown haggard with the vigils he kept, and wrinkled with violent emotions; and Diard almost trembled before the clear, penetrating eyes. At such times her husband's assumed gaiety alarmed her even more than the dark look that his face wore in repose, when for a moment he happened to forget the part that he was playing. He feared his wife as the criminal fears the headsman. Juana saw in him a disgrace on her children's name; and Diard dreaded her, she was like some passionless Vengeance, a Justice with unchanging brows, with the arm that should one day strike always suspended above him.

One day, about fifteen years after his marriage, Diard found himself without resources. He owed a hundred thousand crowns, and was possessed of a bare hundred thousand francs. His mansion (all that he possessed beside ready money) was mortgaged beyond its value. A few more days, and the prestige of enormous wealth must fade; and when those days of grace had expired, no helping hand would be stretched out, no purse would be open for him. Nothing but unlooked-for luck could save him now from the slough into which he must fall; and he would but sink the deeper in it, men would scorn him the more because for awhile they had estimated him at more than his just value.

Very opportunely, therefore, he learned that with the beginning of the season diplomatists and foreigners of distinction flocked to watering-places in the Pyrenees, that play ran high at these resorts, and that the visitors were doubtless well able to pay their losings. So he determined to set out at once for the Pyrenees. He had no mind to leave his wife in Paris; some of his creditors might enlighten her as to his awkward position, and he wished to keep it secret, so he took Juana and the two children. He would not allow the tutor to go with them, and made some difficulties about Juana's maid, who, with a single man-servant, composed their traveling suite. His tone was curt and peremptory; his energy seemed to have returned to him. This hasty journey sent a shiver of dread to Juana's soul; her penetration was at fault, she

could not imagine the why and wherefore of their leaving Paris. Her husband seemed to be in high spirits on the way; and during the time spent together perforce in the traveling carriage, he took more and more notice of the children, and was more kindly to the children's mother. And yet—every day brought new and dark forebodings to Juana, the forebodings of a mother's heart. These inward warnings, even when there is no apparent reason for them, are seldom vain, and the veil that hides the future grows thin for a mother's eyes.

Diard took a house, not large, but very nicely furnished, situated in one of the quietest parts of Bordeaux. It happened to be a corner house with a large garden, surrounded on three sides by streets, and on the fourth by the wall of a neighboring dwelling. Diard paid the rent in advance, and installed his wife and family, leaving Juana fifty louis, a sum barely sufficient to meet the housekeeping expenses for three months. Mme. Diard made no comment on this unwonted niggardliness. When her husband told her that he was about to go to the Baths, and that she was to remain in Bordeaux, she made up her mind that the children should learn the Spanish and Italian languages thoroughly, and that they should read with her the great masterpieces of either tongue.

With this object in view, Juana's life should be retired and simple, and in consequence her expenses would be few. Her own woman waited upon them; and, to simplify the housekeeping, she arranged on the morrow of Diard's departure to have their meals sent in from a restaurant. Everything was provided for until her husband's return, and she had no money left. Her amusements must consist in occasional walks with the children. She was now a woman of thirty-three; her beauty had developed to its fullest extent, she was in the full splendor of her maturity. Scarcely had she appeared in Bordeaux before people talked of nothing but the lovely Spanish lady. She received a first love-letter, and thenceforth confined her walks to her own garden.

At first Diard had a run of luck at the Baths. He won

three hundred thousand francs in two months; but it never occurred to him to send any money to his wife, he meant to keep as large a sum as possible by him, and to play for yet higher stakes. Towards the end of the last month a Marchese di Montefiore came to the Baths, preceded by a reputation for a fine figure, and great wealth, for the match that he had made with an English lady of family, and most of all for a passion for gaming. Diard waited for his old comrade in arms, to add the spoils to his winnings. A gambler with something like four hundred thousand francs at his back can command most things; Diard felt confident in his luck, and renewed his acquaintance with Montefiore. That gentleman received him coldly, but they played together, and Diard lost everything.

"Montefiore, my dear fellow," said the sometime quartermaster, after a turn round the room in which he had ruined himself, "I owe you a hundred thousand francs; but I have left my money at Bordeaux, where my wife is staying."

As a matter of fact, Diard had notes for the amount in his pockets at that moment, but, with the self-possession of a man accustomed to take in all the possibilities of a situation at a glance, he still hoped something from the incalculable chances of the gaming-table. Montefiore had expressed a desire to see something of Bordeaux; and if Diard were to settle at once with him, he would have nothing left, and could not have his "revenge." A "revenge" will sometimes more than make good all previous losses. All these burning hopes depended on the answer that the Marquis might give.

"Let it stand, my dear fellow," said Montefiore; "we will go to Bordeaux together. I am rich enough now in all conscience; why should I take an old comrade's money?"

Three days later, Diard and the Italian were at Bordeaux. Montefiore offered the Provençal his revenge. In the course of an evening, which Diard began by paying down the hundred thousand francs, he lost two hundred thousand more upon parole. He was as light-hearted over his losses as if he

could swim in gold. It was eleven o'clock, and a glorious night, surely Montefiore must wish to breathe the fresh air under the open sky, and to take a walk to cool down a little after the excitement of play; Diard suggested that the Italian should accompany him to his house and take a cup of tea there when the money was paid over.

"But Mme. Diard!" queried Montefiore.

"Pshaw!" answered the Provençal.

They went downstairs together; but before leaving the house, Diard went into the dining-room, asked for a glass of water, and walked about the room as he waited for it. In this way he managed to secrete a tiny steel knife with a handle of mother-of-pearl, such as is used at dessert for fruit; the thing had not yet been put away in its place.

"Where do you live?" asked Montefiore, as they crossed the court; "I must leave word, so as to have the carriage sent round for me."

Diard gave minute directions.

"Of course, I am perfectly safe as long as I am with you, you see," said Montefiore in a low voice, as he took Diard's arm; "but if I came back by myself, and some scamp were to follow me, I should be worth killing."

"Then have you money about you?"

"Oh! next to nothing," said the cautious Italian, "only my winnings. But they would make a pretty fortune for a penniless rascal; he might take brevet rank as an honest man afterwards for the rest of his life, that I know."

Diard took the Italian into a deserted street. He had noticed the gateway of a single house in it at the end of a sort of avenue of trees, and that there were high dark walls on either side. Just as they reached the end of this road he had the audacity to ask his friend, in soldierly fashion, to walk on. Montefiore understood Diard's meaning, and turned to go with him. Scarcely had they set foot in the shadow, when Diard sprang like a tiger upon the Marquis, tripped him up, boldly set his foot on his victim's throat, and plunged the knife again and again into his heart, till the blade snapped

off short in his body. Then he searched Montefiore, took his money, his pocket-book, and everything that the Marquis had.

But though Diard had set about his work in a frenzy that left him perfectly clear-headed, and completed it with the deftness of a pickpocket; though he had taken his victim adroitly by surprise, Montefiore had had time to shriek "Murder!" once or twice, a shrill, far-reaching cry that must have sent a thrill of horror through many sleepers, and his dying groans were fearful to hear.

Diard did not know that even as they turned into the avenue a crowd of people returning home from the theatre had reached the upper end of the street. They had heard Montefiore's dying cries, though the Provençal had tried to stifle the sounds, never relaxing the pressure of his foot upon the murdered man's throat, until at last they ceased.

The high walls still echoed with dying groans which guided the crowd to the spot whence they came. The sound of many feet filled the avenue and rang through Diard's brain. The murderer did not lose his head; he came out from under the trees, and walked very quietly along the street, as if he had been drawn thither by curiosity, and saw that he had come too late to be of any use. He even turned to make sure of the distance that separated him from the newcomers, and saw them all rush into the avenue, save one man, who not unnaturally stood still to watch Diard's movements.

"There he lies! There he lies!" shouted voices from the avenue. They had caught sight of Montefiore's dead body in front of the great house. The gateway was shut fast, and after diligent search they could not find the murderer in the alley.

As soon as he heard the shout, Diard knew that he had got the start; he seemed to have the strength of a lion in him and the fleetness of a stag; he began to run, nay, he flew. He saw, or fancied that he saw, a second crowd at the other end of the road, and darted down a side street. But even as he fled, windows were opened, and rows of heads

were thrust out, lights and shouting issued from every door; to Diard, running for dear life, it seemed as if he were rushing through a tumult of cries and swaying lights. As he fled straight along the road before him, his legs stood him in such good stead that he left the crowd behind; but he could not keep out of sight of the windows, nor avoid the watchful eyes that traversed the length and breadth of a street faster than he could fly.

In the twinkling of an eye, soldiers, gendarmes, and householders were all astir. Some in their zeal had gone to wake up Commissaries of Police, others stood by the dead body. The alarm spread out into the suburbs in the direction of the fugitive (whom it followed like a conflagration from street to street) and into the heart of the town, where it reached the authorities. Diard heard as in a dream the hurrying feet, the yells of a whole horror-stricken city. But his ideas were still clear; he still preserved his presence of mind, and he rubbed his hands against the walls as he ran.

At last he reached the garden-wall of his own house. He thought that he had thrown his pursuers off the scent. The place was perfectly silent save for the far-off murmur of the city, scarcely louder there than the sound of the sea. He dipped his hands into a runnel of clear water and drank. Then, looking about him, he saw a heap of loose stones by the roadside, and hastened to bury his spoils beneath it, acting on some dim notion such as crosses a criminal's mind when he has not yet found a consistent tale to account for his actions, and hopes to establish his innocence by lack of proofs against him. When this was accomplished, he tried to look serene and calm, forced a smile, and knocked gently at his own door, hoping that no one had seen him. He looked up at the house front and saw a light in his wife's windows. And then in his agitation of spirit visions of Juana's peaceful life rose before him; he saw her sitting there in the candlelight with her children on either side of her, and the vision smote his brain like a blow from a hammer. The waiting-

woman opened the door, Diard entered, and hastily shut it to again. He dared to breathe more freely, but he remembered that he was covered with perspiration, and sent the maid up to Juana, while he stayed below in the darkness. He wiped his face with a handkerchief and set his clothes in order, as a coxcomb smoothes his coat before calling upon a pretty woman; then for a moment he stood in the moonlight examining his hands; he passed them over his face, and with unspeakable joy found that there was no trace of blood upon him, doubtless his victim's wounds had bled internally.

He went up to Juana's room, and his manner was as quiet and composed as if he had come home after the theatre, to sleep. As he climbed the stairs, he could think over his position, and summed it up in a phrase—he must leave the house and reach the harbor. These ideas did not cross his brain in words; he saw them written in letters of fire upon the darkness. Once down at the harbor, he could lie in hiding during the day, and return at night for his treasure; then he would creep with it like a rat into the hold of some vessel, and leave the port, no one suspecting that he was on board. For all these things money was wanted in the first place. And he had nothing. The waiting-woman came with a light.

"Félicie," he said, "do you not hear that noise? people are shouting in the street. Go and find out what it is and let me know——"

His wife in her white dressing-gown was sitting at a table, reading Cervantes in Spanish with Francisco and Juan; the two children's eyes followed the text while their mother read aloud. All three of them stopped and looked up at Diard, who stood with his hands in his pockets, surprised perhaps by the surroundings, the peaceful scene, the fair faces of the woman and the children in the softly-lit room. It was like a living picture of a Madonna with her son and the little Saint John on either side.

"Juana, I have something to say to you."

"What is it?" she asked. In her husband's wan and sallow

face she read the news of this calamity that she had expected daily; it had come at last.

"Nothing, but I should like to speak to you—to you, quite alone," and he fixed his eyes on the two little boys.

"Go to your room, my darlings, and go to bed," said Juana. "Say your prayers without me."

The two boys went away in silence, with the uninquisitive obedience of children who have been well brought up.

"Dear Juana," Diard began in coaxing tones, "I left you very little money, and I am very sorry for it now. Listen, since I relieved you of the cares of your household by giving you an allowance, perhaps you may have saved a little money, as all women do?"

"No," answered Juana, "I have nothing. You did not allow anything for the expenses of the children's education. I am not reproaching you at all, dear; I only remind you that you forgot about it, to explain how it is that I have no money. All that you gave me I spent on lessons and masters——"

"That will do!" Diard broke in. *"Sacré tonnerre!* time is precious. Have you no jewels?"

"You know quite well that I never wear them."

"Then there is not a *sou* in the house!" cried Diard, like a man bereft of his senses.

"Why do you cry out?" she asked.

"Juana," he began, "I have just killed a man!"

Juana rushed to the children's room, and returned, shutting all the doors after her.

"Your sons must not hear a word of this," she said; "but whom can you have fought with?"

"Montefiore," he answered.

"Ah!" she said, and a sigh broke from her; "he is the one man whom you had a right to kill——"

"There were plenty of reasons why he should die by my hand. But let us lose no time. Money, I want money, in God's name! They may be on my track. We did not fight, Juana, I—I killed him."

"Killed him!" she cried. "But how——"

"Why, how does one kill a man? He had robbed me of all I had at play; and I have taken it back again. Juana, since we have no money, you might go now, while everything is quiet, and look for my money under the heap of stones at the end of the road; you know the place."

"Then," said Juana, "you have robbed him."

"What business is it of yours? Fly I must, mustn't I? Have you any money? . . . They are after me!"

"Who?"

"The authorities."

Juana left the room, and came back suddenly.

"Here," she cried, holding out a trinket, but standing at a distance from him; "this is Doña Lagounia's cross. There are four rubies in it, and the stones are very valuable; so I have been told. Be quick, fly, fly——why don't you go?"

"Félicie has not come back," he said, in dull amazement. "Can they have arrested her?"

Juana dropped the cross on the edge of the table, and sprang towards the windows that looked out upon the street. Outside in the moonlight he saw a row of soldiers taking their places in absolute silence along the walls. She came back again; to all appearance she was perfectly calm.

"You have not a minute to lose," she said to her husband; "you must escape through the garden. Here is the key of the little door."

A last counsel of prudence led her, however, to give a glance over the garden. In the shadows under the trees she saw the silvery gleam of the metal rims of the gandarmes' caps. She even heard a vague murmur of a not far-distant crowd; sentinels were keeping back the people gathered together by curiosity at the further ends of the streets by which the house was approached.

As a matter of fact, Diard had been seen from the windows of the houses; the maid-servant had been frightened, and afterwards arrested; and, acting on this information, the military and the crowd had soon blocked the ends of the

streets that lay on two sides of the house. A dozen gendarmes, coming off duty at the theatres, were posted outside; others had climbed the wall, and were searching the garden, a proceeding authorized by the serious nature of the crime.

"Monsieur," said Juana, "it is too late. The whole town is aroused."

Diard rushed from window to window with the wild recklessness of a bird that dashes frantically against every pane. Juana stood absorbed in her thoughts.

"Where can I hide?" he asked.

He looked at the chimney, and Juana stared at the two empty chairs. To her it seemed only a moment since her children were sitting there. Just at that moment the gate opened, and the courtyard echoed with the sound of many footsteps.

"Juana, dear Juana, for pity's sake, tell me what to do?"

"I will tell you," she said; "I will save you."

"Ah! you will be my good angel!"

Again Juana returned with one of Diard's pistols; she held it out to him, and turned her head away. Diard did not take it. Juana heard sounds from the courtyard; they had brought in the dead body of the Marquis to confront the murderer. She came away from the window and looked at Diard; he was white and haggard; his strength failed him; he made as if he would sink into a chair.

"For your children's sake," she said, thrusting the weapon into his hands.

"But, my dear Juana, my little Juana, do you really believe that . . . ? Juana, is there such need of haste? . . . I would like to kiss you before . . ."

The gendarmes were on the stairs. Then Juana took up the pistol, held it at Diard's head; with a firm grasp on his throat, she held him tightly in spite of his cries, fired, and let the weapon fall to the ground.

The door was suddenly flung open at that moment. The public prosecutor, followed by a magistrate and his clerk, a

doctor, and the gendarmes, all the instruments of man's justice, appeared upon the scene.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is that M. Diard?" answered the public prosecutor, pointing to the body lying bent double upon the floor.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Your dress is covered with blood, madame——"

"Do you not understand how it is?" asked Juana.

She went over to the little table and sat down there, and took up the volume of Cervantes; her face was colorless; she strove to control her inward nervous agitation.

"Leave the room," said the public prosecutor to the gendarmes. He made a sign to the magistrate and the doctor, and they remained.

"Madame, under the circumstances, we can only congratulate you on your husband's death. If he was carried away by passion, at any rate he has died like a soldier, and it is vain for justice to pursue him now. Yet little as we may desire to intrude upon you at such a time, the law obliges us to inquire into a death by violence. Permit us to do our duty."

"May I change my dress?" she asked, laying down the volume.

"Yes, madame, but you must bring it here. The doctor will doubtless require it——"

"It would be too painful to Mme. Diard to be present while I go through my task," said the doctor, understanding the public prosecutor's suspicions. "Will you permit her, gentlemen, to remain in the adjoining room?"

The two functionaries approved the kindly doctor's suggestion, and Félicie went to her mistress. Then the magistrate and the public prosecutor spoke together for awhile in a low voice. It is the unhappy lot of administrators of justice to be in duty bound to suspect everybody and everything. By dint of imagining evil motives, and every possible combination that they may bring about, so as to discover the truth that lurks beneath the most inconsistent actions, it

is impossible but that their dreadful office should in course of time dry up the source of the generous impulses to which they may never yield. If the sensibilities of the surgeon who explores the mysteries of the body are blunted by degrees, what becomes of the inner sensibility of the judge who is compelled to probe the intricate recesses of the human conscience? Magistrates are the first victims of their profession; their progress is one perpetual mourning for their lost illusions, and the crimes that hang so heavily about the necks of criminals weigh no less upon their judges. An old man seated in the tribunal of justice is sublime; but do we not shudder to see a young face there? In this case the magistrate was a young man, and it was his duty to say to the public prosecutor, "Was the woman her husband's accomplice, do you think? Must we take proceedings? Ought she, in your opinion, to be examined?"

By way of reply, the public prosecutor shrugged his shoulders; apparently it was a matter of indifference.

"Montefiore and Diard," he remarked, "were a pair of notorious scamps. The servant-girl knew nothing about the crime. We need not go any further."

The doctor was making his examination of Diard's body, and dictating his report to the clerk. Suddenly he rushed into Juana's room.

"Madame——"

Juana, who had changed her blood-stained dress, confronted the doctor.

"You shot your husband, did you not?" he asked, bending to say the words in her ear.

"Yes, monsieur," the Spaniard answered.

"And from circumstantial evidence" (the doctor went on dictating) *"we conclude that the said Diard has taken his life by his own act.*—Have you finished?" he asked the clerk after a pause.

"Yes," answered the scribe.

The doctor put his signature to the document. Juana glanced at him, and could scarcely keep back the tears that, for a moment, filled her eyes.

"Gentlemen," she said, as she turned to the public prosecutor, "I am a stranger, a Spaniard. I do not know the law. I know no one in Bordeaux. I entreat you to do me this kindness, will you procure me a passport for Spain?"

"One moment!" exclaimed the magistrate. "Madame, what has become of the sum of money that was stolen from the Marquis di Montefiore?"

"M. Diard said something about a heap of stones beneath which he had hidden it," she answered.

"Where?"

"In the street."

The two functionaries exchanged glances. Juana's involuntary start was sublime. She appealed to the doctor.

"Can they suspect me?" she said in his ear; "suspect *me* of some villainy? The heap of stones is sure to be somewhere at the end of the garden. Go yourself, I beg of you, and look for it and find the money."

The doctor went, accompanied by the magistrate, and found Montefiore's pocket-book.

Two days later Juana sold her golden cross to meet the expenses of the journey. As she went with her two children to the diligence in which they were about to travel to the Spanish frontier, some one called her name in the street. It was her dying mother, who was being taken to the hospital; she had caught a glimpse of her daughter through a slit in the curtains of the stretcher on which she lay. Juana bade them carry the stretcher into a gateway, and there for the last time the mother and daughter met. Low as their voices were while they spoke together, Juan overheard these words of farewell:

"Mother, die in peace; I have suffered for you all."

PARIS, *November* 1832.

EL VERDUGO

To Martinez de la Rosa

MIDNIGHT had just sounded from the belfry tower of the little town of Menda. A young French officer, leaning over the parapet of the long terrace at the further end of the castle gardens, seemed to be unusually absorbed in deep thought for one who led the reckless life of a soldier; but it must be admitted that never was the hour, the scene, and the night more favorable to meditation.

The blue dome of the cloudless sky of Spain was overhead; he was looking out over the coy windings of a lovely valley lit by the uncertain starlight and the soft radiance of the moon. The officer, leaning against an orange-tree in blossom, could also see, a hundred feet below him, the town of Menda, which seemed to nestle for shelter from the north wind at the foot of the crags on which the castle itself was built. He turned his head and caught sight of the sea; the moonlit waves made a broad frame of silver for the landscape.

There were lights in the castle windows. The mirth and movement of a ball, the sounds of the violins, the laughter of the officers and their partners in the dance was borne towards him, and blended with the far-off murmur of the waves. The cool night had a certain bracing effect upon his frame, wearied as he had been by the heat of the day. He seemed to bathe in the air, made fragrant by the strong, sweet scent of flowers and of aromatic trees in the gardens.

The castle of Menda belonged to a Spanish grandee, who was living in it at that time with his family. All through the evening the oldest daughter of the house had watched the officer with such a wistful interest that the Spanish lady's

compassionate eyes might well have set the young Frenchman dreaming. Clara was beautiful; and although she had three brothers and a sister, the broad lands of the Marqués de Légañès appeared to be sufficient warrant for Victor Marchand's belief that the young lady would have a splendid dowry. But how could he dare to imagine that the most fanatical believer in blue blood in all Spain would give his daughter to the son of a grocer in Paris? Moreover, the French were hated. It was because the Marquis had been suspected of an attempt to raise the country in favor of Ferdinand VII. that General G——, who governed the province, had stationed Victor Marchand's battalion in the little town of Menda to overawe the neighboring districts which received the Marqués de Légañès' word as law. A recent despatch from Marshal Ney had given ground for fear that the English might ere long effect a landing on the coast, and had indicated the Marquis as being in correspondence with the Cabinet in London.

In spite, therefore, of the welcome with which the Spaniards had received Victor Marchand and his soldiers, that officer was always on his guard. As he went towards the terrace, where he had just surveyed the town and the districts confided to his charge, he had been asking himself what construction he ought to put upon the friendliness which the Marquis had invariably shown him, and how to reconcile the apparent tranquillity of the country with his General's uneasiness. But a moment later these thoughts were driven from his mind by the instinct of caution and very legitimate curiosity. It had just struck him that there was a very fair number of lights in the town below. Although it was the Feast of Saint James, he himself had issued orders that very morning that all lights must be put out in the town at the hour prescribèd by military regulations. The castle alone had been excepted in this order. Plainly here and there he saw the gleam of bayonets, where his own men were at their accustomed posts; but in the town there was a solemn silence, and not a sign that the Spaniards

had given themselves up to the intoxication of a festival. He tried vainly for awhile to explain this breach of the regulations on the part of the inhabitants; the mystery seemed but so much the more obscure because he had left instructions with some of his officers to do police duty that night, and make the rounds of the town.

With the impetuosity of youth, he was about to spring through a gap in the wall preparatory to a rapid scramble down the rocks, thinking to reach a small guard-house at the nearest entrance into the town more quickly than by the beaten track, when a faint sound stopped him. He fancied that he could hear the light footstep of a woman along the graveled garden walk. He turned his head and saw no one; for one moment his eyes were dazzled by the wonderful brightness of the sea, the next he saw a sight so ominous that he stood stock-still with amazement, thinking that his senses must be deceiving him. The white moonbeams lighted the horizon, so that he could distinguish the sails of ships still a considerable distance out at sea. A shudder ran through him; he tried to persuade himself that this was some optical illusion brought about by chance effects of moonlight on the waves; and even as he made the attempt, a hoarse voice called to him by name. The officer glanced at the gap in the wall; saw a soldier's head slowly emerge from it, and knew the grenadier whom he had ordered to accompany him to the castle.

"Is that you, Commandant?"

"Yes. What is it?" returned the young officer in a low voice. A kind of presentiment warned him to act cautiously.

"Those beggars down there are creeping about like worms; and, by your leave, I came as quickly as I could to report my little reconnoitering expedition."

"Go on," answered Victor Marchand.

"I have just been following a man from the castle who came round this way with a lantern in his hand. A lantern is a suspicious matter with a vengeance! I don't imagine that there was any need for that good Christian to be lighting

tapers at this time of night. Says I to myself, 'They mean to gobble us up!' and I set myself to dogging his heels; and that is how I found out that there is a pile of faggots, sir, two or three steps away from here."

Suddenly a dreadful shriek rang through the town below, and cut the man short. A light flashed in the Commandant's face, and the poor grenadier dropped down with a bullet through his head. Ten paces away a bonfire flared up like a conflagration. The sounds of music and laughter ceased all at once in the ballroom; the silence of death, broken only by groans, succeeded to the rhythmical murmur of the festival. Then the roar of cannon sounded from across the white plain of the sea.

A cold sweat broke out on the young officer's forehead. He had left his sword behind. He knew that his men had been murdered, and that the English were about to land. He knew that if he lived he would be dishonored; he saw himself summoned before a court-martial. For a moment his eyes measured the depth of the valley; the next, just as he was about to spring down, Clara's hand caught his.

"Fly!" she cried. "My brothers are coming after me to kill you. Down yonder at the foot of the cliff you will find Juanito's Andalusian. Go!"

She thrust him away. The young man gazed at her in dull bewilderment; but obeying the instinct of self-preservation, which never deserts even the bravest, he rushed across the park in the direction pointed out to him, springing from rock to rock in places unknown to any save the goats. He heard Clara calling to her brothers to pursue him; he heard their balls whistling about his ears; but he reached the foot of the cliff, found the horse, mounted, and fled with lightning speed.

A few hours later the young officer reached General G——'s quarters, and found him at dinner with the staff.

"I put my life in your hands!" cried the haggard and exhausted Commandant of Menda.

He sank into a seat, and told his horrible story. It was received with an appalling silence.

"It seems to me that you are more to be pitied than to blame," the terrible General said at last. "You are not answerable for the Spaniard's crimes, and unless the Marshal decides otherwise, I acquit you."

These words brought but cold comfort to the unfortunate officer.

"When the Emperor comes to hear about it!" he cried.

"Oh, he will be for having you shot," said the General, "but we shall see. Now we will say no more about this," he added severely, "except to plan a revenge that shall strike a salutary terror into this country, where they carry on war like savages."

An hour later a whole regiment, a detachment of cavalry, and a convoy of artillery were upon the road. The General and Victor marched at the head of the column. The soldiers had been told of the fate of their comrades, and their rage knew no bounds. The distance between headquarters and the town of Menda was crossed at a well-nigh miraculous speed. Whole villages by the way were found to be under arms; every one of the wretched hamlets was surrounded, and their inhabitants decimated.

It so chanced that the English vessels still lay out at sea, and were no nearer the shore, a fact inexplicable until it was known afterwards that they were artillery transports which had outsailed the rest of the fleet. So the townsmen of Menda, left without the assistance on which they had reckoned when the sails of the English appeared, were surrounded by French troops almost before they had had time to strike a blow. This struck such terror into them that they offered to surrender at discretion. An impulse of devotion, no isolated instance in the history of the Peninsula, led the actual slayers of the French to offer to give themselves up; seeking in this way to save the town, for from the General's reputation for cruelty it was feared that he would give Menda over to the flames, and put the whole popula-

tion to the sword. General G—— took their offer, stipulating that every soul in the castle, from the lowest servant to the Marquis, should likewise be given up to him. These terms being accepted, the General promised to spare the lives of the rest of the townsmen, and to prohibit his soldiers from pillaging or setting fire to the town. A heavy contribution was levied, and the wealthiest inhabitants were taken as hostages to guarantee payment within twenty-four hours.

The General took every necessary precaution for the safety of his troops, provided for the defence of the place, and refused to billet his men in the houses of the town. After they had bivouacked, he went up to the castle and entered it as a conqueror. The whole family of the Léganès and their household were gagged, shut up in the great ballroom, and closely watched. From the windows it was easy to see the whole length of the terrace above the town.

The staff was established in an adjoining gallery, where the General forthwith held a council as to the best means of preventing the landing of the English. An aide-de-camp was despatched to Marshal Ney, orders were issued to plant batteries along the coast, and then the General and his staff turned their attention to their prisoners. The two hundred Spaniards given up by the townsfolk were shot down then and there upon the terrace. And after this military execution, the General gave orders to erect gibbets to the number of the prisoners in the ballroom in the same place, and to send for the hangman out of the town. Victor took advantage of the interval before dinner to pay a visit to the prisoners. He soon came back to the General.

"I am come in haste," he faltered out, "to ask a favor."

"You!" exclaimed the General, with bitter irony in his tones.

"Alas!" answered Victor, "it is a sorry favor. The Marquis has seen them erecting the gallows, and hopes that you will commute the punishment for his family; he entreats you to have the nobles beheaded."

"Granted," said the General.

"He further asks that they may be allowed the consolations of religion, and that they may be unbound; they give you their word that they will not attempt to escape."

"That I permit," said the General, "but you are answerable for them."

"The old noble offers you all that he has if you will pardon his youngest son."

"Really!" cried the Commander. "His property is forfeit already to King Joseph." He paused; a contemptuous thought set wrinkles in his forehead, as he added, "I will do better than they ask. I understand what he means by that last request of his. Very good. Let him hand down his name to posterity; but whenever it is mentioned, all Spain shall remember his treason and its punishment! I will give the fortune and his life to any one of the sons who will do the executioner's office. . . . There, don't talk any more about them to me."

Dinner was ready. The officers sat down to satisfy an appetite whetted by hunger. Only one among them was absent from the table—that one was Victor Marchand. After long hesitation, he went to the ballroom, and heard the last sighs of the proud house of Léganès. He looked sadly at the scene before him. Only last night, in this very room, he had seen their faces whirled past him in the waltz, and he shuddered to think that those girlish heads with those of the three young brothers must fall in a brief space by the executioner's sword. There sat the father and mother, their three sons and two daughters, perfectly motionless, bound to their gilded chairs. Eight serving men stood with their hands tied behind them. These fifteen prisoners, under sentence of death, exchanged grave glances; it was difficult to read the thoughts that filled them from their eyes, but profound resignation and regret that their enterprise should have failed so completely was written on more than one brow.

The impassive soldiers who guarded them respected the

grief of her bitter enemies. A gleam of curiosity lighted up all faces when Victor came in. He gave orders that the condemned prisoners should be unbound, and himself unfastened the cords that held Clara a prisoner. She smiled mournfully at him. The officer could not refrain from lightly touching the young girl's arm; he could not help admiring her dark hair, her slender waist. She was a true daughter of Spain, with a Spanish complexion, a Spaniard's eyes, blacker than the raven's wing beneath their long curving lashes.

"Did you succeed?" she asked, with a mournful smile, in which a certain girlish charm still lingered.

Victor could not repress a groan. He looked from the faces of the three brothers to Clara, and again at the three young Spaniards. The first, the oldest of the family, was a man of thirty. He was short, and somewhat ill-made; he looked haughty and proud, but a certain distinction was not lacking in his bearing, and he was apparently no stranger to the delicacy of feeling for which in olden times the chivalry of Spain was famous. His name was Juanito. The second son, Felipe, was about twenty years of age; he was like his sister Clara; and the youngest was a child of eight. In the features of the little Manuel a painter would have discerned something of that Roman steadfastness which David has given to the children's faces in his Republican *genre* pictures. The old Marquis, with his white hair, might have come down from some canvas of Murillo's. Victor threw back his head in despair after this survey; how should one of these accept the General's offer! Nevertheless he ventured to intrust it to Clara. A shudder ran through the Spanish girl, but she recovered herself almost instantly, and knelt before her father.

"Father," she said, "bid Juanito swear to obey the commands that you shall give him, and we shall be content."

The Marquesa trembled with hope, but as she leant towards her husband and learned Clara's hideous secret, the mother fainted away. Juanito understood it all, and leapt

up like a caged lion. Victor took it upon himself to dismiss the soldiers, after receiving an assurance of entire submission from the Marquis: The servants were led away and given over to the hangman and their fate. When only Victor remained on guard in the room, the old Marqués de Légañès rose to his feet.

"Juanito," he said. For all answer Juanito bowed his head in a way that meant refusal; he sank down into his chair, and fixed tearless eyes upon his father and mother in an intolerable gaze. Clara went over to him and sat on his knee; she put her arms about him, and pressed kisses on his eyelids, saying gaily:

"Dear Juanito, if you but knew how sweet death at your hands will be to me! I shall not be compelled to submit to the hateful touch of the hangman's fingers. You will snatch me away from the evils to come and . . . Dear, kind Juanito, you could not bear the thought of my belonging to any one—well, then?"

The velvet eyes gave Victor a burning glance; she seemed to try to awaken in Juanito's heart his hatred for the French.

"Take courage," said his brother Felipe, "or our well-nigh royal line will be extinct."

Suddenly Clara sprang to her feet. The group round Juanito fell back, and the son who had rebelled with such good reason was confronted with his aged father.

"Juanito, I command you!" said the Marquis solemnly.

The young Count gave no sign, and his father fell on his knees; Clara, Manuel, and Felipe unconsciously followed his example, stretching out suppliant hands to him who must save their family from oblivion, and seeming to echo their father's words.

"Can it be that you lack the fortitude of a Spaniard and true sensibility, my son? Do you mean to keep me on my knees? What right have you to think of your own life and of your own sufferings?—Is this my son, madame?" the old Marquis added, turning to his wife.

"He will consent to it," cried the mother in agony of soul.

She had seen a slight contraction of Juanito's brows which she, his mother, alone understood.

Mariquita, the second daughter, knelt, with her slender clinging arms about her mother; the hot tears fell from her eyes, and her little brother Manuel upbraided her for weeping. Just at that moment the castle chaplain came in; the whole family surrounded him and led him up to Juanito. Victor felt that he could endure the sight no longer, and with a sign to Clara he hurried from the room to make one last effort for them. He found the General in boisterous spirits; the officers were still sitting over their dinner and drinking together; the wine had loosened their tongues.

An hour later, a hundred of the principal citizens of Menda were summoned to the terrace by the General's orders to witness the execution of the family of Léganès. A detachment had been told off to keep order among the Spanish townsfolk, who were marshaled beneath the gallows whereon the Marquis' servants hung; the feet of those martyrs of their cause all but touched the citizens' heads. Thirty paces away stood the block; the blade of a scimitar glittered upon it, and the executioner stood by in case Juanito should refuse at the last.

The deepest silence prevailed, but before long it was broken by the sound of many footsteps, the measured tramp of a picket of soldiers, and the jingling of their weapons. Mingled with these came other noises—loud talk and laughter from the dinner-table where the officers were sitting; just as the music and the sound of the dancers' feet had drowned the preparations for last night's treacherous butchery.

All eyes turned to the castle, and beheld the family of nobles coming forth with incredible composure to their death. Every brow was serene and calm. One alone among them, haggard and overcome, leant on the arm of the priest, who poured forth all the consolations of religion for the one man who was condemned to live. Then the executioner, like the spectators, knew that Juanito had consented to perform his office for a day. The old Marquis and his wife, Clara and

Mariquita, and their two brothers knelt a few paces from the fatal spot. Juanito reached it, guided by the priest. As he stood at the block the executioner plucked him by the sleeve, and took him aside, probably to give him certain instructions. The confessor so placed the victims that they could not witness the executions, but one and all stood upright and fearless, like Spaniards, as they were.

Clara sprang to her brother's side before the others.

"Juanito," she said to him, "be merciful to my lack of courage. Take me first!"

As she spoke, the footsteps of a man running at full speed echoed from the walls, and Victor appeared upon the scene. Clara was kneeling before the block; her white neck seemed to appeal to the blade to fall. The officer turned faint, but he found strength to rush to her side.

"The General grants you your life if you will consent to marry me," he murmured.

The Spanish girl gave the officer a glance full of proud disdain.

"Now, Juanito!" she said in her deep-toned voice.

Her head fell at Victor's feet. A shudder ran through the Marquesa de Légañès, a convulsive tremor that she could not control, but she gave no other sign of her anguish.

"Is this where I ought to be, dear Juanito? Is it all right?" little Manuel asked his brother.

"Oh, Mariquita, you are weeping!" Juanito said when his sister came.

"Yes," said the girl; "I am thinking of you, poor Juanito; how unhappy you will be when we are gone."

Then the Marquis' tall figure approached. He looked at the block where his children's blood had been shed, turned to the mute and motionless crowd, and said in a loud voice as he stretched out his hands to Juanito:

"Spaniards! I give my son a father's blessing.—Now, *Marquis,* strike 'without fear;' thou art 'without reproach.'"

But when his mother came near, leaning on the confessor's arm—"She fed me from her breast!" Juanito cried, in tones

that drew a cry of horror from the crowd. The uproarious mirth of the officers over their wine died away before that terrible cry. The Marquesa knew that Juanito's courage was exhausted; at one bound she sprang to the balustrade, leapt forth, and was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. A cry of admiration broke from the spectators. Juanito swooned.

"General," said an officer, half drunk by this time, "Marchand has just been telling me something about this execution; I will wager that it was not by your orders——"

"Are you forgetting, gentlemen, that in a month's time five hundred families in France will be in mourning, and that we are still in Spain?" cried General G——. "Do you want us to leave our bones here?"

But not a man at the table, not even a subaltern, dared to empty his glass after that speech.

In spite of the respect in which all men hold the Marqués de Légañès, in spite of the title of *El Verdugo* (the executioner) conferred upon him as a patent of nobility by the King of Spain, the great noble is consumed by a gnawing grief. He lives a retired life, and seldom appears in public. The burden of his heroic crime weighs heavily upon him, and he seems to wait impatiently till the birth of a second son shall release him, and he may go to join the Shades that never cease to haunt him.

PARIS, *October* 1820.

FAREWELL

To Prince Friedrich von Schwarzenberg

"Come, Deputy of the Centre, come along! We shall have to mend our pace if we mean to sit down to dinner when every one else does, and that's a fact! Hurry up! Jump, Marquis! That's it! Well done! You are bounding over the furrows just like a stag!"

These words were uttered by a sportsman seated much at his ease on the outskirts of the Forêt de l'Isle-Adam; he had just finished a Havana cigar, which he had smoked while he waited for his companion, who had evidently been straying about for some time among the forest undergrowth. Four panting dogs by the speaker's side likewise watched the progress of the personage for whose benefit the remarks were made. To make their sarcastic import fully clear, it should be added that the second sportsman was both short and stout; his ample girth indicated a truly magisterial corpulence, and in consequence his progress across the furrows was by no means easy. He was striding over a vast field of stubble; the dried corn-stalks underfoot added not a little to the difficulties of his passage, and to add to his discomforts, the genial influence of the sun that slanted into his eyes brought great drops of perspiration into his face. The uppermost thought in his mind being a strong desire to keep his balance, he lurched to and fro much like a coach jolted over an atrocious road.

It was one of those September days of almost tropical heat that finishes the work of summer and ripens the grapes. Such heat forebodes a coming storm; and though as yet there were wide patches of blue between the dark rain-clouds low down on the horizon, pale golden masses were rising and

scattering with ominous swiftness from west to east, and drawing a shadowy veil across the sky. The wind was still, save in the upper regions of the air, so that the weight of the atmosphere seemed to compress the steamy heat of the earth into the forest glades. The tall forest trees shut out every breath of air so completely that the little valley across which the sportsman was making his way was as hot as a furnace; the silent forest seemed parched with the fiery heat. Birds and insects were mute; the topmost twigs of the trees swayed with scarcely perceptible motion. Any one who retains some recollection of the summer of 1819 must surely compassionate the plight of the hapless supporter of the ministry who toiled and sweated over the stubble to rejoin his satirical comrade. That gentleman, as he smoked his cigar, had arrived, by a process of calculation based on the altitude of the sun, to the conclusion that it must be about five o'clock.

"Where the devil are we?" asked the stout sportsman. He wiped his brow as he spoke, and propped himself against a tree in the field opposite his companion, feeling quite unequal to clearing the broad ditch that lay between them.

"And you ask that question of *me!*" retorted the other, laughing from his bed of tall brown grasses on the top of the bank. He flung the end of his cigar into the ditch, exclaiming, "I swear by Saint Hubert that no one shall catch *me* risking myself again in a country that I don't know with a magistrate, even if, like you, my dear d'Albon, he happens to be an old schoolfellow."

"Why, Philip, have you really forgotten your own language? You surely must have left your wits behind you in Siberia," said the stouter of the two, with a glance half-comic, half-pathetic at a guide-post distant about a hundred paces from them.

"I understand," replied the one addressed as Philip. He snatched up his rifle, suddenly sprang to his feet, made but one jump of it into the field, and rushed off to the guide-post. "This way, d'Albon, here you are! left about!" he shouted, gesticulating in the direction of the highroad. *"To Baillet*

and l'Isle-Adam!" he went on; "so if we go along here, we shall be sure to come upon the cross-road to Cassan."

"Quite right, Colonel," said M. d'Albon, putting the cap with which he had been fanning himself back on his head.

"Then *forward!* highly respected Councillor," returned Colonel Philip, whistling to the dogs, that seemed already to obey him rather than the magistrate their master.

"Are you aware, my lord Marquis, that two leagues yet remain before us?" inquired the malicious soldier. "That village down yonder must be Baillet."

"Great heavens!" cried the Marquis d'Albon. "Go on to Cassan by all means, if you like; but if you do, you will go alone. I prefer to wait here, storm or no storm; you can send a horse for me from the château. You have been making game of me, Sucy. We were to have a nice day's sport by ourselves; we were not to go very far from Cassan, and go over ground that I knew. Pooh! instead of a day's fun, you have kept me running like a greyhound since four o'clock this morning, and nothing but a cup or two of milk by way of breakfast. Oh! if ever you find yourself in a court of law, I will take care that the day goes against you if you were in the right a hundred times over."

The dejected sportsman sat himself down on one of the stumps at the foot of the guide-post, disencumbered himself of his rifle and empty game-bag, and heaved a prolonged sigh.

"Oh, France, behold thy Deputies!" laughed Colonel de Sucy. "Poor old d'Albon; if you had spent six months at the other end of Siberia as I did . . ."

He broke off, and his eyes sought the sky, as if the story of his troubles was a secret between himself and God.

"Come, march!" he added. "If you once sit down, it is all over with you."

"I can't help it, Philip! It is such an old habit in a magistrate! I am dead beat, upon my honor. If I had only bagged one hare though!"

Two men more different are seldom seen together. The

civilian, a man of forty-two, seemed scarcely more than thirty; while the soldier, at thirty years of age, looked to be forty at the least. Both wore the red rosette that proclaimed them to be officers of the Legion of Honor. A few locks of hair, mingled white and black, like a magpie's wing, had strayed from beneath the Colonel's cap; while thick, fair curls clustered about the magistrate's temples. The Colonel was tall, spare, dried up, but muscular; the lines in his pale face told a tale of vehement passions or of terrible sorrows; but his comrade's jolly countenance beamed with health, and would have done credit to an Epicurean. Both men were deeply sunburnt. Their high gaiters of brown leather carried souvenirs of every ditch and swamp that they crossed that day.

"Come, come," cried M. de Sucy, "forward! One short hour's march, and we shall be at Cassan with a good dinner before us."

"You never were in love, that is positive," returned the Councillor, with a comically piteous expression. "You are as inexorable as Article 304 of the Penal Code!"

Philip de Sucy shuddered violently. Deep lines appeared in his broad forehead, his face was overcast like the sky above them; but though his features seemed to contract with the pain of an intolerably bitter memory, no tears came to his eyes. Like all men of strong character, he possessed the power of forcing his emotions down into some inner depth, and, perhaps, like many reserved natures, he shrank from laying bare a wound too deep for any words of human speech, and winced at the thought of ridicule from those who do not care to understand. M. d'Albon was one of those who are keenly sensitive by nature to the distress of others, who feel at once the pain they have unwittingly given by some blunder. He respected his friend's mood, rose to his feet, forgot his weariness, and followed in silence, thoroughly annoyed with himself for having touched on a wound that seemed not yet healed.

"Some day I will tell you my story," Philip said at last,

wringing his friend's hand, while he acknowledged his dumb repentance with a heart-rending glance. "To-day I cannot."

They walked on in silence. As the Colonel's distress passed off the Councillor's fatigue returned. Instinctively, or rather urged by weariness, his eyes explored the depths of the forest around them; he looked high and low among the trees, and gazed along the avenues, hoping to discover some dwelling where he might ask for hospitality. They reached a place where several roads met; and the Councillor, fancying that he saw a thin film of smoke rising through the trees, made a stand and looked sharply about him. He caught a glimpse of the dark green branches of some firs among the other forest trees, and finally, "A house! a house!" he shouted. No sailor could have raised a cry of "Land ahead!" more joyfully than he.

He plunged at once into undergrowth, somewhat of the thickest; and the Colonel, who had fallen into deep musings, followed him unheedingly.

"I would rather have an omelette here and home-made bread, and a chair to sit down in, than go further for a sofa, truffles, and Bordeaux wine at Cassan."

This outburst of enthusiasm on the Councillor's part was caused by the sight of the whitened wall of a house in the distance, standing out in strong contrast against the brown masses of knotted tree-trunks in the forest.

"Aha! This used to be a priory, I should say," the Marquis d'Albon cried once more, as they stood before a grim old gateway. Through the grating they could see the house itself standing in the midst of some considerable extent of park land; from the style of the architecture it appeared to have been a monastery once upon a time.

"Those knowing rascals of monks knew how to choose a site!"

This last exclamation was caused by the magistrate's amazement at the romantic hermitage before his eyes. The house had been built on a spot half-way up the hillside on the slope below the village of Nerville, which crowned the

summit. A huge circle of great oak-trees, hundreds of years old, guarded the solitary place from intrusion. There appeared to be about forty acres of the park. The main building of the monastery faced the south, and stood in a space of green meadow, picturesquely intersected by several tiny clear streams, and by larger sheets of water so disposed as to have a natural effect. Shapely trees with contrasting foliage grew here and there. Grottos had been ingeniously contrived; and broad terraced walks, now in ruin, though the steps were broken and the balustrades eaten through with rust, gave to this sylvan Thebaïd a certain character of its own. The art of man and the picturesqueness of nature had wrought together to produce a charming effect. Human passions surely could not cross that boundary of tall oak-trees which shut out the sounds of the outer world, and screened the fierce heat of the sun from this forest sanctuary.

"What neglect!" said M. d'Albon to himself, after the first sense of delight in the melancholy aspect of the ruins in the landscape, which seemed blighted by a curse.

It was like some haunted spot, shunned of men. The twisted ivy stems clambered everywhere, hiding everything away beneath a luxuriant green mantle. Moss and lichens, brown and gray, yellow and red, covered the trees with fantastic patches of color, grew upon the benches in the garden, overran the roof and the walls of the house. The window-sashes were weather-worn and warped with age, the balconies were dropping to pieces, the terraces in ruins. Here and there the folding shutters hung by a single hinge. The crazy doors would have given way at the first attempt to force an entrance.

Out in the orchard the neglected fruit-trees were running to wood, the rambling branches bore no fruit save the glistening mistletoe berries, and tall plants were growing in the garden walks. All this forlornness shed a charm across the picture that wrought on the spectator's mind with an influence like that of some enchanting poem, filling his soul with dreamy fancies. A poet must have lingered there in deep

and melancholy musings, marveling at the harmony of this wilderness, where decay had a certain grace of its own.

In a moment a few gleams of sunlight struggled through a rift in the clouds, and a shower of colored light fell over the wild garden. The brown tiles of the roof glowed in the light, the mosses took bright hues, strange shadows played over the grass beneath the trees; the dead autumn tints grew vivid, bright unexpected contrasts were evoked by the light, every leaf stood out sharply in the clear, thin air. Then all at once the sunlight died away, and the landscape that seemed to have spoken grew silent and gloomy again, or rather, it took gray soft tones like the tenderest hues of autumn dusk.

"It is the palace of the Sleeping Beauty," the Councillor said to himself (he had already begun to look at the place from the point of view of an owner of property). "Whom can the place belong to, I wonder. He must be a great fool not to live on such a charming little estate!"

Just at that moment, a woman sprang out from under a walnut tree on the right-hand side of the gateway, and passed before the Councillor as noiselessly and swiftly as the shadow of a cloud. This apparition struck him dumb with amazement.

"Hallo, d'Albon, what is the matter?" asked the Colonel.

"I am rubbing my eyes to find out whether I am awake or asleep," answered the magistrate, whose countenance was pressed against the grating in the hope of catching a second glimpse of the ghost.

"In all probability she is under that fig-tree," he went on, indicating, for Philip's benefit, some branches that overtopped the wall on the left-hand side of the gateway.

"She? Who?"

"Eh! how should I know?" answered M. d'Albon. "A strange-looking woman sprang up there under my very eyes just now," he added, in a low voice; "she looked to me more like a ghost than a living being. She was so slender, light, and shadowy that she might be transparent. Her face was as white as milk, her hair, her eyes, and her dress were black.

She gave me a glance as she flitted by. I am not easily frightened, but that cold stony stare of hers froze the blood in my veins."

"Was she pretty?" inquired Philip.

"I don't know. I saw nothing but those eyes in her head."

"The devil take dinner at Cassan!" exclaimed the Colonel; "let us stay here. I am as eager as a boy to see the inside of this queer place. The window-sashes are painted red, do you see? There is a red line round the panels of the doors and the edges of the shutters. It might be the devil's own dwelling; perhaps he took it over when the monks went out. Now, then, let us give chase to the black and white lady; come along!" cried Philip, with forced gaiety.

He had scarcely finished speaking when the two sportsmen heard a cry as if some bird had been taken in a snare. They listened. There was a sound like the murmur of rippling water, as something forced its way through the bushes; but diligently as they lent their ears, there was no footfall on the path, the earth kept the secret of the mysterious woman's passage, if indeed she had moved from her hiding-place.

"This is very strange!" cried Philip.

Following the wall of the path, the two friends reached before long a forest road leading to the village of Chauvry; they went along this track in the direction of the highway to Paris, and reached another large gateway. Through the railings they had a complete view of the façade of the mysterious house. From this point of view, the dilapidation was still more apparent. Huge cracks had riven the walls of the main body of the house built round three sides of a square. Evidently the place was allowed to fall to ruin; there were holes in the roof, broken slates and tiles lay about below. Fallen fruit from the orchard trees was left to rot on the ground; a cow was grazing over the bowling-green and trampling the flowers in the garden beds; a goat browsed on the green grapes and young vine-shoots on the trellis.

"It is all of a piece," remarked the Colonel. "The neglect is in a fashion systematic." He laid his hand on the chain

of the bell-pull, but the bell had lost its clapper. The two friends heard no sound save the peculiar grating creak of the rusty spring. A little door in the wall beside the gateway, though ruinous, held good against all their efforts to force it open.

"Oho! all this is growing very interesting," Philip said to his companion.

"If I were not a magistrate," returned M. d'Albon, "I should think that the woman in black is a witch.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the cow came up to the railings and held out her warm damp nose, as if she were glad of human society. Then a woman, if so indescribable a being could be called a woman, sprang up from the bushes, and pulled at the cord about the cow's neck. From beneath the crimson handkerchief about the woman's head, fair matted hair escaped, something as tow hangs about a spindle. She wore no kerchief at the throat. A coarse black-and-gray striped woolen petticoat, too short by several inches, left her legs bare. She might have belonged to some tribe of Redskins in Fenimore Cooper's novels; for her neck, arms, and ankles looked as if they had been painted brick-red. There was no spark of intelligence in her featureless face; her pale, bluish eyes looked out dull and expressionless from beneath the eyebrows with one or two straggling white hairs on them. Her teeth were prominent and uneven, but white as a dog's.

"Hallo, good woman," called M. de Sucy.

She came slowly up to the railing, and stared at the two sportsmen with a contorted smile painful to see.

"Where are we? What is the name of the house yonder? Whom does it belong to? Who are you? Do you come from hereabouts?"

To these questions, and to a host of others poured out in succession upon her by the two friends, she made no answer save gurgling sounds in the throat, more like animal sounds than anything uttered by a human voice.

"Don't you see that she is deaf and dumb?" said M. d'Albon.

"Minorites!" the peasant woman said at last.

"Ah! she is right. The house looks as though it might once have been a Minorite convent," he went on.

Again they plied the peasant woman with questions, but, like a wayward child, she colored up, fidgeted with her sabot, twisted the rope by which she held the cow that had fallen to grazing again, stared at the sportsmen, and scrutinized every article of clothing upon them; she gibbered, grunted, and clucked, but no articulate word did she utter.

"Your name?" asked Philip, fixing her with his eyes as if he were trying to bewitch the woman.

"Geneviève," she answered, with an empty laugh.

"The cow is the most intelligent creature we have seen so far," exclaimed the magistrate. "I shall fire a shot, that ought to bring somebody out."

D'Albon had just taken up his rifle when the Colonel put out a hand to stop him, and pointed out the mysterious woman who had aroused such lively curiosity in them. She seemed to be absorbed in deep thought, as she went along a green alley some little distance away, so slowly that the friends had time to take a good look at her. She wore a threadbare black satin gown, her long hair curled thickly over her forehead, and fell like a shawl about her shoulders below her waist. Doubtless she was accustomed to the dishevelment of her locks, for she seldom put back the hair on either side of her brows; but when she did so, she shook her head with a sudden jerk that had not to be repeated to shake away the thick veil from her eyes or forehead. In everything that she did, moreover, there was a wonderful certainty in the working of the mechanism, an unerring swiftness and precision, like that of an animal, well-night marvelous in a woman.

The two sportsmen were amazed to see her spring up into an apple-tree and cling to a bough lightly as a bird. She snatched at the fruit, ate it, and dropped to the ground with the same supple grace that charms us in a squirrel. The elasticity of her limbs took all appearance of awkwardness or

effort from her movements. She played about upon the grass, rolling in it as a young child might have done; then, on a sudden, she lay still and stretched out her feet and hands, with the languid natural grace of a kitten dozing in the sun.

There was a threatening growl of thunder far away, and at this she started up on all fours and listened, like a dog who hears a strange footstep. One result of this strange attitude was to separate her thick black hair into two masses, that fell away on either side of her face and left her shoulders bare; the two witnesses of this singular scene wondered at the whiteness of the skin that shone like a meadow daisy, and at the neck that indicated the perfection of the rest of her form.

A wailing cry broke from her; she rose to her feet, and stood upright. Every successive movement was made so lightly, so gracefully, so easily, that she seemed to be no human being, but one of Ossian's maids of the mist. She went across the grass to one of the pools of water, deftly shook off her shoe, and seemed to enjoy dipping her foot, white as marble, in the spring; doubtless it pleased her to make the circling ripples, and watch them glitter like gems. She knelt down by the brink, and played there like a child, dabbling her long tresses in the water, and flinging them loose again to see the water drip from the ends, like a string of pearls in the sunless light.

"She is mad!" cried the Councillor.

A hoarse cry rang through the air; it came from Geneviève, and seemed to be meant for the mysterious woman. She rose to her feet in a moment, flinging back the hair from her face, and then the Colonel and d'Albon could see her features distinctly. As soon as she saw the two friends she bounded to the railings with the swiftness of a fawn.

"Farewell!" she said in low, musical tones, but they could not discover the least trace of feeling, the least idea in the sweet sounds that they had awaited impatiently.

M. d'Albon admired the long lashes, the thick, dark eyebrows, the dazzling fairness of a skin untinged by any trace

of red. Only the delicate blue veins contrasted with that uniform whiteness.

But when the Marquis turned to communicate his surprise at the sight of so strange an apparition, he saw the Colonel stretched on the grass like one dead. M. d'Albon fired his gun into the air, shouted for help, and tried to raise his friend. At the sound of the shot, the strange lady, who had stood motionless by the gate, fled away, crying out like a wounded wild creature, circling round and round in the meadow, with every sign of unspeakable terror.

M. d'Albon heard a carriage rolling along the road to l'Isle-Adam, and waved his handkerchief to implore help. The carriage immediately came towards the Minorite convent, and M. d'Albon recognized neighbors, M. and Mme. de Grandville, who hastened to alight and put their carriage at his disposal. Colonel de Sucy inhaled the salts which Mme. de Grandville happened to have with her; he opened his eyes, looked towards the mysterious figure that still fled wailing through the meadow, and a faint cry of horror broke from him; he closed his eyes again, with a dumb gesture of entreaty to his friends to take him away from this scene. M. and Mme. de Grandville begged the Councillor to make use of their carriage, adding very obligingly that they themselves would walk.

"Who can the lady be?" inquired the magistrate, looking towards the strange figure.

"People think that she comes from Moulins," answered M. de Grandville. "She is a Comtesse de Vandières; she is said to be mad; but as she has only been here for two months, I cannot vouch for the truth of all this hearsay talk."

M. d'Albon thanked M. and Mme. de Grandville, and they set out for Cassan.

"It is she!" cried Philip, coming to himself.

"She? who?" asked d'Albon.

"Stéphanie. . . . Ah! dead and yet living still; still alive, but her mind is gone! I thought the sight would kill me."

The prudent magistrate, recognizing the gravity of the crisis through which his friend was passing, refrained from asking questions or exciting him further, and grew impatient of the length of the way to the château, for the change wrought in the Colonel's face alarmed him. He feared lest the Countess' terrible disease had communicated itself to Philip's brain. When they reached the avenue at l'Isle-Adam, d'Albon sent the servant for the local doctor, so that the Colonel had scarcely been laid in bed before the surgeon was beside him.

"If Monsieur le Colonel had not been fasting, the shock must have killed him," pronounced the leech. "He was over-tired, and that saved him," and with a few directions as to the patient's treatment, he went to prepare a composing draught himself. M. de Sucy was better the next morning, but the doctor had insisted on sitting up all night with him.

"I confess, Monsieur le Marquis," the surgeon said, "that I feared for the brain. M. de Sucy has had some very violent shock; he is a man of strong passions, but, with his temperament, the first shock decides everything. He will very likely be out of danger to-morrow."

The doctor was perfectly right. The next day the patient was allowed to see his friend.

"I want you to do something for me, dear d'Albon," Philip said, grasping his friend's hand. "Hasten at once to the Minorite convent, find out everything about the lady whom we saw there, and come back as soon as you can; I shall count the minutes till I see you again."

M. d'Albon called for his horse, and galloped over to the old monastery. When we reached the gateway he found some one standing there, a tall, spare man with a kindly face, who answered in the affirmative when he was asked if he lived in the ruined house. M. d'Albon explained his errand.

"Why, then, it must have been you, sir, who fired that unlucky shot! You all but killed my poor invalid."

"Eh! I fired into the air!"

"If you had actually hit Madame la Comtesse, you would have done less harm to her."

"Well, well, then, we can neither of us complain, for the sight of the Countess all but killed my friend, M. de Sucy."

"The Baron de Sucy, is it possible?" cried the doctor, clasping his hands. "Has he been in Russia? was he in the Beresina?"

"Yes," answered d'Albon. "He was taken prisoner by the Cossacks and sent to Siberia. He has not been back in this country a twelvemonth."

"Come in, monsieur," said the other, and he led the way to a drawing-room on the ground-floor. Everything in the room showed signs of capricious destruction.

Valuable china jars lay in fragments on either side of a clock beneath a glass shade, which had escaped. The silk hangings about the windows were torn to rags, while the muslin curtains were untouched.

"You see about you the havoc wrought by a charming being to whom I have dedicated my life. She is my niece; and though medical science is powerless in her case, I hope to restore her to reason, though the method which I am trying is, unluckily, only possible to the wealthy."

Then, like all who live much alone and daily bear the burden of a heavy trouble, he fell to talk with the magistrate. This is the story that he told, set in order, and with the many digressions made by both teller and hearer omitted.

When, at nine o'clock at night, on the 28th of November 1812, Marshal Victor abandoned the heights of Studzianka, which he had held through the day, he left a thousand men behind with instructions to protect, till the last possible moment, the two pontoon bridges over the Beresina that still held good. This rear guard was to save if possible an appalling number of stragglers, so numbed with the cold, that they obstinately refused to leave the baggage-wagons. The heroism of the generous band was doomed to fail; for, unluckily, the men who poured down to the eastern bank of the Beresina

found carriages, caissons, and all kinds of property which the Army had been forced to abandon during its passage on the 27th and 28th days of November. The poor, half-frozen wretches, sunk almost to the level of brutes, finding such unhoped-for riches, bivouacked in the deserted space, laid hands on the military stores, improvised huts out of the material, lighted fires with anything that would burn, cut up the carcasses of the horses for food, tore out the linings of the carriages, wrapped themselves in them, and lay down to sleep instead of crossing the Beresina in peace under cover of night—the Beresina that even then had proved, by an incredible fatality, so disastrous to the Army. Such apathy on the part of the poor fellows can only be understood by those who remember tramping across those vast deserts of snow, with nothing to quench their thirst but snow, snow for their bed, snow as far as the horizon on every side, and no food but snow, a little frozen beetroot, horseflesh, or a handful of meal.

The miserable creatures were dropping down, overcome by hunger, thirst, weariness, and sleep, when they reached the shores of the Beresina and found fuel and fire and victuals, countless wagons and tents, a whole improvised town, in short. The whole village of Studzianka had been removed piecemeal from the heights to the plain, and the very perils and miseries of this dangerous and doleful habitation smiled invitingly to the wayfarers, who beheld no prospect beyond it but the awful Russian deserts. A huge hospice, in short, was erected for twenty hours of existence. Only one thought—the thought of rest—appealed to men weary of life or rejoicing in unlooked-for comfort.

They lay right in the line of fire from the cannon of the Russian left; but to that vast mass of human creatures, a patch upon the snow, sometimes dark, sometimes breaking into flame, the indefatigable grape-shot was but one discomfort the more. For them it was only a storm, and they paid the less attention to the bolts that fell among them because there were none to strike down there save dying men, the

wounded, or perhaps the dead. Stragglers came up in little bands at every moment. These walking corpses instantly separated, and wandered begging from fire to fire; and meeting, for the most part, with refusals, banded themselves together again, and took by force what they could not otherwise obtain. They were deaf to the voices of their officers prophesying death on the morrow, and spent the energy required to cross the swamp in building shelters for the night and preparing a meal that often proved fatal. The coming death no longer seemed an evil, for it gave them an hour of slumber before it came. Hunger and thirst and cold—these were evils, but not death.

At last wood and fuel and canvas and shelters failed, and hideous brawls began between destitute late comers and the rich already in possession of a lodging. The weaker were driven away, until a few last fugitives before the Russian advance were obliged to make their bed in the snow, and lay down to rise no more.

Little by little the mass of half-dead humanity became so dense, so deaf, so torpid,—or perhaps it should be said so happy—that Marshal Victor, their heroic defender against twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein, was actually compelled to cut his way by force through this forest of men, so as to cross the Beresina with the five thousand heroes whom he was leading to the Emperor. The miserable creatures preferred to be trampled and crushed to death rather than stir from their places, and died without a sound, smiling at the dead ashes of their fires, forgetful of France.

Not before ten o'clock that night did the Duc de Belluno reach the other side of the river. Before committing his men to the pontoon bridges that led to Zembin, he left the fate of the rearguard at Studzianka in Eblé's hands, and to Eblé the survivors of the calamities of the Beresina owed their lives.

About midnight, the great General, followed by a courageous officer, came out of his little hut by the bridge, and gazed at the spectacle of this camp between the bank of the Bere-

sina and the Borizof road to Studzianka. The thunder of the Russian cannonade had ceased. Here and there faces that had nothing human about them were lighted up by countless fires that seemed to grow pale in the glare of the snowfields, and to give no light. Nearly thirty thousand wretches, belonging to every nation that Napoleon had hurled upon Russia, lay there hazarding their lives with the indifference of brute beasts.

"We have all these to save," the General said to his subordinate. "To-morrow morning the Russians will be in Studzianka. The moment they come up we shall have to set fire to the bridge; so pluck up heart, my boy! Make your way out and up yonder through them, and tell General Fournier that he has barely time to evacuate his post and cut his way through to the bridge. As soon as you have seen him set out, follow him down, take some able-bodied men, and set fire to the tents, wagons, caissons, carriages, anything and everything, without pity, and drive these fellows on to the bridge. Compel everything that walks on two legs to take refuge on the other bank. We must set fire to the camp; it is our last resource. If Berthier had let me burn those d——d wagons sooner, no lives need have been lost in the river except my poor pontooners, my fifty heroes, who saved the Army, and will be forgotten."

The General passed his hand over his forehead and said no more. He felt that Poland would be his tomb, and foresaw that afterwards no voice would be raised to speak for the noble fellows who had plunged into the stream—into the waters of the Beresina!—to drive in the piles for the bridges. And, indeed, only one of them is living now, or, to be more accurate, starving, utterly forgotten in a country village! The brave officer had scarcely gone a hundred paces towards Studzianka, when General Eblé roused some of his patient pontooners, and began his work of mercy by setting fire to the camp on the side nearest the bridge, so compelling the sleepers to rise and cross the Beresina. Meanwhile the young

aide-de-camp, not without difficulty, reached the one wooden house yet left standing in Studzianka.

"So the box is pretty full, is it, messmate?" he said to a man whom he found outside.

"You will be a knowing fellow if you manage to get inside," the officer returned, without turning round or stopping his occupation of hacking at the woodwork of the house with his sabre.

"Philip, is that you?" cried the aide-de-camp, recognizing the voice of one of his friends.

"Yes. Aha! is it you, old fellow?" returned M. de Sucy, looking round at the aide-de-camp, who like himself was not more than twenty-three years old. "I fancied you were on the other side of this confounded river. Do you come to bring us sweetmeats for dessert? You will get a warm welcome," he added, as he tore away a strip of bark from the wood and gave it to his horse by way of fodder.

"I am looking for your commandant. General Eblé has sent me to tell him to file off to Zembin. You have only just time to cut your way through that mass of dead men; as soon as you get through, I am going to set fire to the place to make them move——"

"You almost make me feel warm! Your news has put me in a fever; I have two friends to bring through. Ah! but for those marmots, I should have been dead before now, old fellow. On their account I am taking care of my horse instead of eating him. But have you a crust about you, for pity's sake? It is thirty hours since I have stowed any victuals. I have been fighting like a madman to keep up a little warmth in my body and what courage I have left."

"Poor Philip! I have nothing—not a scrap!—But is your General in there?"

"Don't attempt to go in. The barn is full of our wounded. Go up a bit higher, and you will see a sort of pig-sty to the right—that is where the General is. Good-bye, my dear fellow. If ever we meet again in a quadrille in a ballroom in Paris——"

He did not finish the sentence, for the treachery of the northeast wind that whistled about them froze Major Philip's lips, and the aide-de-camp kept moving for fear of being frost-bitten. Silence soon prevailed, scarcely broken by the groans of the wounded in the barn, or the stifled sounds made by M. de Sucy's horse crunching the frozen bark with famished eagerness. Philip thrust his sabre into the sheath, caught at the bridle of the precious animal that he had managed to keep for so long, and drew her away from the miserable fodder that she was bolting with apparent relish.

"Come along, Bichette! come along! It lies with you now, my beauty, to save Stéphanie's life. There, wait a little longer, and they will let us lie down and die, no doubt;" and Philip, wrapped in a pelisse, to which doubtless he owed his life and energies, began to run, stamping his feet on the frozen snow to keep them warm. He was scarce five hundred paces away before he saw a great fire blazing on the spot where he had left his carriage that morning with an old soldier to guard it. A dreadful misgiving seized upon him. Many a man under the influence of a powerful feeling during the Retreat summoned up energy for his friend's sake when he would not have exerted himself to save his own life; so it was with Philip. He soon neared a hollow, where he had left a carriage sheltered from the cannonade, a carriage that held a young woman, his playmate in childhood, dearer to him than any one else on earth.

Some thirty stragglers were sitting round a tremendous blaze, which they kept up with logs of wood, planks wrenched from the floors of the caissons, and wheels, and panels from carriage bodies. These had been, doubtless, among the last to join the sea of fires, huts, and human faces that filled the great furrow in the land between Studzianka and the fatal river, a restless living sea of almost imperceptibly moving figures, that sent up a smothered hum of sound blended with frightful shrieks. It seemed that hunger and despair had driven these forlorn creatures to take forcible possession of the carriage, for the old General and his young wife, whom

they had found warmly wrapped in pelisses and traveling cloaks, were now crouching on the earth beside the fire, and one of the carriage doors was broken.

As soon as the group of stragglers round the fire heard the footfall of the Major's horse, a frenzied yell of hunger went up from them. "A horse!" they cried. "A horse!"

All the voices went up as one voice.

"Back! back! Look out!" shouted two or three of them, leveling their muskets at the animal.

"I will pitch you neck and crop into your fire, you blackguards!" cried Philip, springing in front of the mare. "There are dead horses lying up yonder; go and look for them!"

"What a rum customer the officer is!—Once, twice, will you get out of the way?" returned a giant grenadier. "You won't? All right then, just as you please."

A woman's shriek rang out above the report. Luckily, none of the bullets hit Philip; but poor Bichette lay in the agony of death. Three of the men came up and put an end to her with thrusts of the bayonet.

"Cannibals! leave me the rug and my pistols," cried Philip in desperation.

"Oh! the pistols if you like; but as for the rug, there is a fellow yonder who has had nothing to wet his whistle these two days, and is shivering in his coat of cobwebs, and that's our General."

Philip looked up and saw a man with worn-out shoes and a dozen rents in his trousers; the only covering for his head was a ragged foraging cap, white with rime. He said no more after that, but snatched up his pistols.

Five of the men dragged the mare to the fire, and began to cut up the carcass as dexterously as any journeymen butchers in Paris. The scraps of meat were distributed and flung upon the coals, and the whole process was magically swift. Philip went over to the woman who had given the cry of terror when she recognized his danger, and sat down by her side. She sat motionless upon a cushion taken

from the carriage, warming herself at the blaze; she said no word, and gazed at him without a smile. He saw beside her the soldier whom he had left mounting guard over the carriage; the poor fellow had been wounded; he had been overpowered by numbers, and forced to surrender to the stragglers who had set upon him, and, like a dog who defends his master's dinner till the last moment, he had taken his share of the spoil, and had made a sort of cloak for himself out of a sheet. At that particular moment he was busy toasting a piece of horseflesh, and in his face the major saw a gleeful anticipation of the coming feast.

The Comte de Vandières, who seemed to have grown quite childish in the last few days, sat on a cushion close to his wife, and stared into the fire. He was only just beginning to shake off his torpor under the influence of the warmth. He had been no more affected by Philip's arrival and danger than by the fight and subsequent pillaging of his traveling carriage.

At first Sucy caught the young Countess' hand in his, trying to express his affection for her, and the pain that it gave him to see her reduced like this to the last extremity of misery; but he said nothing as he sat by her side on the thawing heap of snow, he gave himself up to the pleasure of the sensation of warmth, forgetful of danger, forgetful of all things else in the world. In spite of himself his face expanded with an almost fatuous expression of satisfaction, and he waited impatiently till the scrap of horseflesh that had fallen to his soldier's share should be cooked. The smell of the charred flesh stimulated his hunger. Hunger clamored within him and silenced his heart, his courage, and his love. He coolly looked round on the results of the spoliation of his carriage. Not a man seated round the fire but had shared the booty, the rugs, cushions, pelisses, dresses,—articles of clothing that belonged to the Count and Countess or to himself. Philip turned to see if anything worth taking was left in the berline. He saw by the light of the flames, gold, and diamonds, and silver lying scattered about; no one had cared to appropriate the least particle. There was something

hideous in the silence among those human creatures round the fire; none of them spoke, none of them stirred, save to do such things as each considered necessary for his own comfort.

It was a grotesque misery. The men's faces were warped and disfigured with the cold, and plastered over with a layer of mud; you could see the thickness of the mask by the channel traced down their cheeks by the tears that ran from their eyes, and their long slovenly-kept beards added to the hideousness of their appearance. Some were wrapped round in women's shawls, others in horse-cloths, dirty blankets, rags stiffened with melting hoar-frost; here and there a man wore a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other, in fact, there was not one of them but wore some ludicrously odd costume. But the men themselves with such matter for jest about them were gloomy and taciturn.

The silence was unbroken save by the crackling of the wood, the roaring of the flames, the far-off hum of the camp, and the sound of sabres hacking at the carcass of the mare. Some of the hungriest of the men were still cutting tid-bits for themselves. A few miserable creatures, more weary than the others, slept outright; and if they happened to roll into the fire, no one pulled them back. With cut-and-dried logic their fellows argued that if they were not dead, a scorching ought to be sufficient warning to quit and seek out more comfortable quarters. If the poor wretch woke to find himself on fire, he was burned to death, and nobody pitied him. Here and there the men exchanged glances, as if to excuse their indifference by the carelessness of the rest; the thing happened twice under the young Countess' eyes, and she uttered no sound. When all the scraps of horseflesh had been broiled upon the coals, they were devoured with a ravenous greediness that would have been disgusting in wild beasts.

"And now we have seen thirty infantrymen on one horse for the first time in our lives!" cried the grenadier who had shot the mare, the one solitary joke that sustained the Frenchmen's reputation for wit.

Before long the poor fellows huddled themselves up in their clothes, and lay down on planks of timber, on anything but the bare snow, and slept—heedless of the morrow. Major de Sucy having warmed himself and satisfied his hunger, fought in vain against the drowsiness that weighed upon his eyes. During this brief struggle he gazed at the sleeping girl who had turned her face to the fire, so that he could see her closed eyelids and part of her forehead. She was wrapped round in a furred pelisse and a coarse horseman's cloak, her head lay on a blood-stained cushion; a tall astrakhan cap tied over her head by a handkerchief knotted under the chin protected her face as much as possible from the cold, and she had tucked up her feet in the cloak. As she lay curled up in this fashion, she bore no likeness to any creature.

Was this the lowest of camp-followers? Was this the charming woman, the pride of her lover's heart, the queen of many a Parisian ballroom? Alas! even for the eyes of this most devoted friend, there was no discernible trace of womanhood in that bundle of rags and linen, and the cold was mightier than the love in a woman's heart.

Then for the major the husband and wife came to be like two distant dots seen through the thick veil that the most irresistible kind of slumber spread over his eyes. It all seemed to be part of a dream—the leaping flames, the recumbent figures, the awful cold that lay in wait for them three paces away from the warmth of the fire that glowed for a little while. One thought that could not be stifled haunted Philip—"If I go to sleep, we shall all die; I will not sleep," he said to himself.

He slept. After an hour's slumber M. de Sucy was awakened by a hideous uproar and the sound of an explosion. The remembrance of his duty, of the danger of his beloved, rushed upon his mind with a sudden shock. He uttered a cry like the growl of a wild beast. He and his servant stood upright above the rest. They saw a sea of fire in the darkness, and against it moving masses of human figures. Flames

were devouring the huts and tents. Despairing shrieks and yelling cries reached their ears; they saw thousands upon thousands of wild and desperate faces; and through this inferno a column of soldiers was cutting its way to the bridge, between two hedges of dead bodies.

"Our rearguard is in full retreat," cried the major. "There is no hope left!"

"I have spared your traveling carriage, Philip," said a friendly voice.

Sucy turned and saw the young aide-de-camp by the light of the flames.

"Oh, it is all over with us," he answered. "They have eaten my horse. And how am I to make this sleepy general and his wife stir a step?"

"Take a brand, Philip, and threaten them."

"Threaten the Countess? . . ."

"Good-bye," cried the aide-de-camp; "I have only just time to get across that unlucky river, and go I must, there is my mother in France! . . . What a night! This herd of wretches would rather lie here in the snow, and most of them would sooner be burned alive than get up. . . . It is four o'clock, Philip! In two hours the Russians will begin to move, and you will see the Beresina covered with corpses a second time, I can tell you. You haven't a horse, and you cannot carry the Countess, so come along with me," he went on, taking his friend by the arm.

"My dear fellow, how am I to leave Stéphanie?"

Major de Sucy grasped the Countess, set her on her feet, and shook her roughly; he was in despair. He compelled her to wake, and she stared at him with dull fixed eyes.

"Stéphanie, we must go, or we shall die here!"

For all answer, the Countess tried to sink down again and sleep on the earth. The aide-de-camp snatched a brand from the fire and shook it in her face.

"We must save her in spite of herself," cried Philip, and he carried her in his arms to the carriage. He came back to entreat his friend to help him, and the two young men took

the old general and put him beside his wife, without knowing whether he were alive or dead. The major rolled the men over as they crouched on the earth, took away the plundered clothing, and heaped it upon the husband and wife, then he flung some of the broiled fragments of horseflesh into a corner of the carriage.

"Now, what do you mean to do?" asked the aide-de-camp.

"Drag them along!" answered Sucy.

"You are mad!"

"You are right!" exclaimed Philip, folding his arms on his breast.

Suddenly a desperate plan occurred to him.

"Look you here!" he said, grasping his sentinel by the unwounded arm, "I leave her in your care for one hour. Bear in mind that you must die sooner than let any one, no matter whom, come near the carriage!"

The major seized a handful of the lady's diamonds, drew his sabre, and violently battered those who seemed to him to be the bravest among the sleepers. By this means he succeeded in rousing the gigantic grenadier and a couple of men whose rank and regiment were undiscoverable.

"It is all up with us!" he cried.

"Of course it is," returned the grenadier; "but that is all one to me."

"Very well then, if die you must, isn't it better to sell your life for a pretty woman, and stand a chance of going back to France again?"

"I would rather go to sleep," said one of the men, dropping down into the snow; "and if you worry me again, major, I shall stick my toasting-iron into your belly!"

"What is it all about, sir?" asked the grenadier. "The man's drunk. He is a Parisian, and likes to lie in the lap of luxury."

"You shall have these, good fellow," said the major, holding out a *rivière* of diamonds, "if you will follow me and fight like a madman. The Russians are not ten minutes

away; they have horses; we will march up to the nearest battery and carry off two stout ones."

"How about the sentinels, major?"

"One of us three——" he began; then he turned from the soldier and looked at the aide-de-camp.—"You are coming, aren't you, Hippolvte?"

Hippolyte nodded assent.

"One of us," the major went on, "will look after the sentry. Besides, perhaps those blessed Russians are also fast asleep."

"All right, major; you are a good sort! But will you take me in your carriage?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes, if you don't leave your bones up yonder.—If I come to grief, promise me, you two, that you will do everything in your power to save the Countess."

"All right," said the grenadier.

They set out for the Russian lines, taking the direction of the batteries that had so cruelly raked the mass of miserable creatures huddled together by the river bank. A few minutes later the hoofs of two galloping horses rang on the frozen snow, and the awakened battery fired a volley that passed over the heads of the sleepers; the hoof-beats rattled so fast on the iron ground that they sounded like the hammering in a smithy. The generous aide-de-camp had fallen; the stalwart grenadier had come off safe and sound; and Philip himself had received a bayonet thrust in the shoulder while defending his friend. Notwithstanding his wound, he clung to his horse's mane, and gripped him with his knees so tightly that the animal was held as in a vise.

"God be praised!" cried the major, when he saw his soldier still on the spot, and the carriage standing where he had left it.

"If you do the right thing by me, sir, you will get me the cross for this. We have treated them to a sword dance to a pretty tune from the rifle, eh?"

"We have done nothing yet! Let us put the horses in. Take hold of these cords."

"They are not long enough."

"All right, grenadier, just go and overhaul those fellows sleeping there; take their shawls, sheets, anything——"

"I say! the rascal is dead," cried the grenadier, as he plundered the first man who came to hand. "Why, they are all dead! how queer!"

"All of them?"

"Yes, every one. It looks as though horseflesh *à la neige* was indigestible."

Philip shuddered at the words. The night had grown twice as cold as before.

"Great heaven! to lose her when I have saved her life a score of times already."

He shook the Countess, "Stéphanie! Stéphanie!" he cried.

She opened her eyes.

"We are saved, madame!"

"Saved!" she echoed, and fell back again.

The horses were harnessed after a fashion at last. The major held his sabre in his unwounded hand, took the reins in the other, saw to his pistols, and sprang on one of the horses, while the grenadier mounted the other. The old sentinel had been pushed into the carriage, and lay across the knees of the general and the Countess; his feet were frozen. Urged on by blows from the flat of the sabre, the horses dragged the carriage at a mad gallop down to the plain, where endless difficulties awaited them. Before long it became almost impossible to advance without crushing sleeping men, women, and even children at every step, all of whom declined to stir when the grenadier awakened them. In vain M. de Sucy looked for the track that the rearguard had cut through this dense crowd of human beings; there was no more sign of their passage than of the wake of a ship in the sea. The horses could only move at a foot-pace, and were stopped most frequently by soldiers, who threatened to kill them.

"Do you mean to get there?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes, if it costs every drop of blood in my body! if it costs the whole world!" the major answered.

"Forward, then! . . . You can't have the omelette without breaking eggs." And the grenadier of the Garde urged on the horses over the prostrate bodies, and upset the bivouacs; the blood-stained wheels ploughing that field of faces left a double furrow of dead. But in justice it should be said that he never ceased to thunder out his warning cry, "Carrion! look out!"

"Poor wretches!" exclaimed the major.

"Bah! That way, or the cold, or the cannon!" said the grenadier, goading on the horses with the point of his sword.

Then came the catastrophe, which must have happened sooner but for miraculous good fortune; the carriage was overturned, and all further progress was stopped at once.

"I expected as much!" exclaimed the imperturbable grenadier. "Oho! he is dead!" he added, looking at his comrade.

"Poor Laurent!" said the major.

"Laurent! Wasn't he in the Fifth Chasseurs?"

"Yes."

"My own cousin.—Pshaw! this beastly life is not so pleasant that one need be sorry for him as things go."

But all this time the carriage lay overturned, and the horses were only released after great and irreparable loss of time. The shock had been so violent that the Countess had been awakened by it, and the subsequent commotion aroused her from her stupor. She shook off the rugs and rose.

"Where are we, Philip?" she asked in musical tones, as she looked about her.

"About five hundred paces from the bridge. We are just about to cross the Beresina. When we are on the other side, Stéphanie, I will not tease you any more; I will let you go to sleep; we shall be in safety, we can go on to Wilna in peace. God grant that you may never know what your life has cost!"

"You are wounded!"

"A mere trifle."

The hour of doom had come. The Russian cannon announced the day. The Russians were in possession of Studzianka, and thence were raking the plain with grapeshot; and by the first dim light of the dawn the major saw two columns moving and forming above on the heights. Then a cry of horror went up from the crowd, and in a moment every one sprang to his feet. Each instinctively felt his danger, and all made a rush for the bridge, surging towards it like a wave.

Then the Russians came down upon them, swift as a conflagration. Men, women, children, and horses all crowded towards the river. Luckily for the major and the Countess, they were still at some distance from the bank. General Eblé had just set fire to the bridge on the other side; but in spite of all the warnings given to those who rushed towards the chance of salvation, not one among them could or would draw back. The overladen bridge gave way, and not only so, the impetus of the frantic living wave towards that fatal bank was such that a dense crowd of human beings was thrust into the water as if by an avalanche. The sound of a single human cry could not be distinguished; there was a dull crash as if an enormous stone had fallen into the water —and the Beresina was covered with corpses.

The violent recoil of those in front, striving to escape this death, brought them into hideous collision with those behind them, who were pressing towards the bank, and many were suffocated and crushed. The Comte and Comtesse de Vandières owed their lives to the carriage. The horses that had trampled and crushed so many dying men were crushed and trampled to death in their turn by the human maelstrom which eddied from the bank. Sheer physical strength saved the major and the grenadier. They killed others in self-defence. That wild sea of human faces and living bodies, surging to and fro as by one impulse, left the bank of the Beresina clear for a few moments. The multitude had hurled themselves back on the plain. Some few men sprang down from the banks toward the river, not so much with any hope

of reaching the opposite shore, which for them meant France, as from dread of the wastes of Siberia. For some bold spirits despair became a panoply. An officer leaped from hummock to hummock of ice, and reached the other shore; one of the soldiers scrambled over miraculously on the piles of dead bodies and drift ice. But the immense multitude left behind saw at last that the Russians would not slaughter twenty thousand unarmed men, too numb with the cold to attempt to resist them, and each awaited his fate with dreadful apathy. By this time the major and his grenadier, the old general and his wife, were left to themselves not very far from the place where the bridge had been. All four stood dry-eyed and silent among the heaps of dead. A few able-bodied men and one or two officers, who had recovered all their energy at this crisis, gathered about them. The group was sufficiently large; there were about fifty men all told. A couple of hundred paces from them stood the wreck of the artillery bridge, which had broken down the day before; the major saw this, and "Let us make a raft!" he cried.

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before the whole group hurried to the ruins of the bridge. A crowd of men began to pick up iron clamps and to hunt for planks and ropes—for all the materials for a raft, in short. A score of armed men and officers, under command of the major, stood on guard to protect the workers from any desperate attempt on the part of the multitude if they should guess their design. The longing for freedom, which inspires prisoners to accomplish impossibilities, cannot be compared with the hope which lent energy at that moment to these forlorn Frenchmen.

"The Russians are upon us! Here are the Russians!" the guard shouted to the workers.

The timbers creaked, the raft grew larger, stronger, and more substantial. Generals, colonels, and common soldiers all alike bent beneath the weight of wagon-wheels, chains, coils of rope, and planks of timber; it was a modern realization of the building of Noah's ark. The young Countess, sit-

ting by her husband's side, looked on, regretful that she could do nothing to aid the workers, though she helped to knot the lengths of rope together.

At last the raft was finished. Forty men launched it out into the river, while ten of the soldiers held the ropes that must keep it moored to the shore. The moment that they saw their handiwork floating on the Beresina, they sprang down onto it from the bank with callous selfishness. The major, dreading the frenzy of the first rush, held back Stéphanie and the general; but a shudder ran through him when he saw the landing place black with people, and men crowding down like playgoers into the pit of a theatre.

"It was I who thought of the raft, you savages!" he cried. "I have saved your lives, and you will not make room for me!"

A confused murmur was the only answer. The men at the edge took up stout poles, thrust them against the bank with all their might, so as to shove the raft out and gain an impetus at its starting upon a journey across a sea of floating ice and dead bodies towards the other shore.

"*Tonnerre de Dieu!* I will knock some of you off into the water if you don't make room for the major and his two companions," shouted the grenadier. He raised his sabre threateningly, delayed the departure, and made the men stand closer together, in spite of threatening yells.

"I shall fall in! . . . I shall go overboard! . . ." his fellows shouted.

"Let us start! Put off!"

The major gazed with tearless eyes at the woman he loved; an impulse of sublime resignation raised her eyes to heaven.

"To die with you!" she said.

In the situation of the folk upon the raft there was a certain comic element. They might utter hideous yells, but not one of them dared to oppose the grenadier, for they were packed together so tightly that if one man were knocked down, the whole raft might capsize. At this delicate crisis, a captain tried to rid himself of one of his neighbors; the

man saw the hostile intention of his officer, collared him, and pitched him overboard. "Aha! The duck has a mind to drink. . . . Over with you!—There is room for two now!" he shouted. "Quick, major! throw your little woman over, and come! Never mind that old dotard! he will drop off to-morrow!"

"Be quick!" cried a voice, made up of a hundred voices.

"Come, major! Those fellows are making a fuss, and well they may!"

The Comte de Vandières flung off his ragged blankets, and stood before them in his general's uniform.

"Let us save the Count," said Philip.

Stéphanie grasped his hand tightly in hers, flung her arms about, and clasped him close in an agonized embrace.

"Farewell!" she said.

Then each knew the other's thoughts. The Comte de Vandières recovered his energies and presence of mind sufficiently to jump on to the raft, whither Stéphanie followed him after one last look at Philip.

"Major, won't you take my place? I do not care a straw for life; I have neither wife, nor child, nor mother belonging to me——"

"I give them into your charge," cried the major, indicating the Count and his wife.

"Be easy; I will take as much care of them as of the apple of my eye."

Philip stood stock-still on the bank. The raft sped so violently towards the opposite shore that it ran aground with a violent shock to all on board. The Count, standing on the very edge, was shaken into the stream; and as he fell, a mass of ice swept by and struck off his head, and sent it flying like a ball.

"Hey! major!" shouted the grenadier.

"Farewell!" a woman's voice called aloud.

An icy shiver of dread ran through Philip de Sucy, and he dropped down where he stood, overcome with cold and sorrow and weariness.

"My poor niece went out of her mind," the doctor added after a brief pause. "Ah! monsieur," he went on, grasping M. d'Albon's hand, "what a fearful life for the poor little thing, so young, so delicate! An unheard-of misfortune separated her from that grenadier of the Garde (Fleuriot by name), and for two years she was dragged on after the army, the laughing-stock of a rabble of outcasts. She went barefoot, I heard, ill-clad, neglected, and starved for months at a time; sometimes confined in a hospital, sometimes living like a hunted animal. God alone knows all the misery which she endured, and yet she lives. She was shut up in a madhouse in a little German town, while her relations, believing her to be dead, were dividing her property here in France.

"In 1816 the grenadier Fleuriot recognized her in an inn in Strasbourg. She had just managed to escape from captivity. Some peasants told him that the Countess had lived for a whole month in a forest, and how that they had tracked her and tried to catch her without success.

"I was at that time not many leagues from Strasbourg; and hearing the talk about this girl in the wood, I wished to verify the strange facts that had given rise to absurd stories. What was my feeling when I beheld the Countess? Fleuriot told me all that he knew of the piteous story. I took the poor fellow with my niece into Auvergne, and there I had the misfortune to lose him. He had some ascendency over Mme. de Vandières. He alone succeeded in persuading her to wear clothes; and in those days her one word of human speech—*Farewell*—she seldom uttered. Fleuriot set himself to the task of awakening certain associations; but there he failed completely; he drew that one sorrowful word from her a little more frequently, that was all. But the old grenadier could amuse her, and devoted himself to playing with her, and through him I hoped; but——" here Stéphanie's uncle broke off. After a moment he went on again.

"Here she has found another creature with whom she seems to have an understanding—an idiot peasant girl, who once, in spite of her plainness and imbecility, fell in love with a

mason. The mason thought of marrying her because she had a little bit of land, and for a whole year poor Geneviève was the happiest of living creatures. She dressed in her best, and danced on Sundays with Dallot; she understood love; there was room for love in her heart and brain. But Dallot thought better of it. He found another girl who had all her senses and rather more land than Geneviève, and he forsook Geneviève for her. Then the poor thing lost the little intelligence that love had developed in her; she can do nothing now but cut grass and look after the cattle. My niece and the poor girl are in some sort bound to each other by the invisible chain of their common destiny, and by their madness due to the same cause. Just come here a moment; look!" and Stéphanie's uncle led the Marquis d'Albon to the window.

There, in fact, the magistrate beheld the pretty Countess sitting on the ground at Geneviève's knee, while the peasant girl was wholly absorbed in combing out Stéphanie's long, black hair with a huge comb. The Countess submitted herself to this, uttering low smothered cries that expressed her enjoyment of the sensation of physical comfort. A shudder ran through M. d'Albon as he saw her attitude of languid abandonment, the animal supineness that revealed an utter lack of intelligence.

"Oh! Philip, Philip!" he cried, "past troubles are as nothing. Is it quite hopeless?" he asked.

The doctor raised his eyes to heaven.

"Good-bye, monsieur," said M. d'Albon, pressing the old man's hand. "My friend is expecting me; you will see him here before long."

"Then it is Stéphanie herself?" cried Sucy when the Marquis had spoken the first few words. "Ah! until now I did not feel sure!" he added. Tears filled the dark eyes that were wont to wear a stern expression.

"Yes; she is the Comtesse de Vandières," his friend replied.

The colonel started up, and hurriedly began to dress.

"Why, Philip!" cried the horrified magistrate. "Are you going mad?"

"I am quite well now," said the colonel simply. "This news has soothed all my bitterest grief; what pain could hurt me while I think of Stéphanie? I am going over to the Minorite convent, to see her and speak to her, to restore her to health again. She is free; ah, surely, surely, happiness will smile on us, or there is no Providence above. How can you think that she could hear my voice, poor Stéphanie, and not recover her reason?"

"She has seen you once already, and she did not recognize you," the magistrate answered gently, trying to suggest some wholesome fears to this friend, whose hopes were visibly too high.

The colonel shuddered, but he began to smile again, with a slight involuntary gesture of incredulity. Nobody ventured to oppose his plans, and a few hours later he had taken up his abode in the old priory, to be near the doctor and the Comtesse de Vandières.

"Where is she?" he cried at once.

"Hush!" answered M. Fanjat, Stéphanie's uncle. "She is sleeping. Stay; here she is."

Philip saw the poor distraught sleeper crouching on a stone bench in the sun. Her thick hair, straggling over her face, screened it from the glare and heat; her arms dropped languidly to the earth; she lay at ease as gracefully as a fawn, her feet tucked up beneath her; her bosom rose and fell with her even breathing; there was the same transparent whiteness as of porcelain in her skin and complexion that we so often admire in children's faces. Geneviève sat there motionless, holding a spray that Stéphanie doubtless had brought down from the top of one of the tallest poplars; the idiot girl was waving the green branch above her, driving away the flies from her sleeping companion, and gently fanning her.

She stared at M. Fanjat and the colonel as they came up; then, like a dumb animal that recognizes its master, she slowly turned her face towards the countess, and watched over

her as before, showing not the slightest sign of intelligence or of astonishment. The air was scorching. The glittering particles of the stone bench shone like sparks of fire; the meadow sent up the quivering vapors that hover above the grass and gleam like golden dust when they catch the light, but Geneviève did not seem to feel the raging heat.

The colonel wrung M. Fanjat's hands; the tears that gathered in the soldier's eyes stole down his cheeks, and fell on the grass at Stéphanie's feet.

"Sir," said her uncle, "for these two years my heart has been broken daily. Before very long you will be as I am; if you do not weep, you will not feel your anguish the less."

"You have taken care of her!" said the colonel, and jealousy no less than gratitude could be read in his eyes.

The two men understood one another. They grasped each other by the hand again, and stood motionless, gazing in admiration at the serenity that slumber had brought into the lovely face before them. Stéphanie heaved a sigh from time to time, and this sigh, that had all the appearance of sensibility, made the unhappy colonel tremble with gladness.

"Alas!" M. Fanjat said gently, "do not deceive yourself, monsieur; as you see her now, she is in full possession of such reason as she has."

Those who have sat for whole hours absorbed in the delight of watching over the slumber of some tenderly-beloved one, whose waking eyes will smile for them, will doubtless understand the bliss and anguish that shook the colonel. For him this slumber was an illusion, the waking must be a kind of death, the most dreadful of all deaths.

Suddenly a kid frisked in two or three bounds towards the bench, and snuffed at Stéphanie. The sound awakened her; she sprang lightly to her feet without scaring away the capricious creature; but as soon as she saw Philip she fled, followed by her four-footed playmate, to a thicket of elder-trees; then she uttered a little cry like the note of a startled wild bird, the same sound that the colonel had heard once before near the grating, when the Countess appeared to M. d'Albon for

the first time. At length she climbed into a laburnum-tree, ensconced herself in the feathery greenery, and peered out at the *strange man* with as much interest as the most inquisitive nightingale in the forest.

"Farewell, farewell, farewell," she said, but the soul sent no trace of expression of feeling through the words, spoken with the careless intonation of a bird's notes.

"She does not know me!" the colonel exclaimed in despair. "Stéphanie! Here is Philip, your Philip! . . . Philip!" and the poor soldier went towards the laburnum-tree; but when he stood three paces away, the Countess eyed him almost defiantly, though there was timidity in her eyes; then at a bound she sprang from the laburnum to an acacia, and thence to a spruce-fir, swinging from bough to bough with marvelous dexterity.

"Do not follow her," said M. Fanjat, addressing the colonel. "You would arouse a feeling of aversion in her which might become insurmountable; I will help you to make her acquaintance and to tame her. Sit down on the bench. If you pay no heed whatever to her, poor child, it will not be long before you will see her come nearer by degrees to look at you."

"That *she* should not know me; that *she* should fly from me!" the colonel repeated, sitting down on a rustic bench and leaning his back against a tree that overshadowed it.

He bowed his head. The doctor remained silent. Before very long the Countess stole softly down from her high refuge in the spruce-fir, flitting like a will-o'-the-wisp; for as the wind stirred the boughs, she lent herself at times to the swaying movements of the trees. At each branch she stopped and peered at the stranger; but as she saw him sitting motionless, she at length jumped down to the grass, stood a while, and came slowly across the meadow. When she took up her position by a tree about ten paces from the bench, M. Fanjat spoke to the colonel in a low voice.

"Feel in my pocket for some lumps of sugar," he said, "and let her see them, she will come; I willingly give up to you

the pleasure of giving her sweetmeats. She is passionately fond of sugar, and by that means you will accustom her to come to you and to know you."

"She never cared for sweet things when she was a woman," Philip answered sadly.

When he held out the lump of sugar between his thumb and finger, and shook it, Stéphanie uttered the wild note again, and sprang quickly towards him; then she stopped short, there was a conflict between longing for the sweet morsel and instinctive fear of him; she looked at the sugar, turned her head away, and looked again like an unfortunate dog forbidden to touch some scrap of food, while his master slowly recites the greater part of the alphabet until he reaches the letter that gives permission. At length animal appetite conquered fear; Stéphanie rushed to Philip, held out a dainty brown hand to pounce upon the coveted morsel, touched her lover's fingers, snatched the piece of sugar, and vanished with it into a thicket. This painful scene was too much for the colonel; he burst into tears, and took refuge in the drawing-room.

"Then has love less courage than affection?" M. Fanjat asked him. "I have hope, Monsieur le Baron. My poor niece was once in a far more pitiable state than at present."

"Is it possible?" cried Philip.

"She would not wear clothes," answered the doctor.

The colonel shuddered, and his face grew pale. To the doctor's mind this pallor was an unhealthy symptom; he went over to him and felt his pulse, M. de Sucy was in a high fever; by dint of persuasion, he succeeded in putting the patient in bed, and gave him a few drops of laudanum to gain repose and sleep.

The Baron de Sucy spent nearly a week, in a constant struggle with a deadly anguish, and before long he had no tears left to shed. He was often well-nigh heartbroken; he could not grow accustomed to the sight of the Countess' madness; but he made terms for himself, as it were, in this cruel position, and sought alleviations in his pain. His heroism

was boundless. He found courage to overcome Stéphanie's wild shyness by choosing sweetmeats for her, and devoted all his thoughts to this, bringing these dainties, and following up the little victories that he set himself to gain over Stéphanie's instincts (the last gleam of intelligence in her), until he succeeded to some extent—she grew *tamer* than ever before. Every morning the colonel went into the park; and if, after a long search for the Countess, he could not discover the tree in which she was rocking herself gently, nor the nook where she lay crouching at play with some bird, nor the roof where she had perched herself, he would whistle the well-known air *Partant pour la Syrie,* which recalled old memories of their love, and Stéphanie would run towards him lightly as a fawn. She saw the colonel so often that she was no longer afraid of him; before very long she would sit on his knee with her thin, lithe arms about him. And while thus they sat as lovers love to do, Philip doled out sweetmeats one by one to the eager Countess. When they were all finished, the fancy often took Stéphanie to search through her lover's pockets with a monkey's quick instinctive dexterity, till she had assured herself that there was nothing left, and then she gazed at Philip with vacant eyes; there was no thought, no gratitude in their clear depths. Then she would play with him. She tried to take off his boots to see his foot; she tore his gloves to shreds, and put on his hat; and she would let him pass his hands through her hair, and take her in his arms, and submit passively to his passionate kisses, and at last, if he shed tears, she would gaze silently at him.

She quite understood the signal when he whistled *Partant pour la Syrie,* but he could never succeed in inducing her to pronounce her own name—*Stéphanie.* Philip persevered in his heart-rending task, sustained by a hope that never left him. If on some bright autumn morning he saw her sitting quietly on a bench under a poplar tree, grown brown now as the season wore, the unhappy lover would lie at her feet and gaze into her eyes as long as she would let him gaze, hoping that some spark of intelligence might gleam from

them. At times he lent himself to an illusion; he would imagine that he saw the hard, changeless light in them falter, that there was a new life and softness in them, and he would cry, "Stéphanie! oh, Stéphanie! you hear me, you see me, do you not?"

But for her the sound of his voice was like any other sound, the stirring of the wind in the trees, or the lowing of the cow on which she scrambled; and the colonel wrung his hands in a despair that lost none of its bitterness; nay, time and these vain efforts only added to his anguish.

One evening, under the quiet sky, in the midst of the silence and peace of the forest hermitage, M. Fanjat saw from a distance that the Baron was busy loading a pistol, and knew that the lover had given up all hope. The blood surged to the old doctor's heart; and if he overcame the dizzy sensation that seized on him, it was because he would rather see his niece live with a disordered brain than lose her for ever. He hurried to the place.

"What are you doing?" he cried.

"That is for me," the colonel answered, pointing to a loaded pistol on the bench, "and this is for her!" he added, as he rammed down the wad into the pistol that he held in his hands.

The Countess lay stretched out on the ground, playing with the balls.

"Then you do not know that last night, as she slept, she murmured 'Philip?' " said the doctor quietly, dissembling his alarm.

"She called my name?" cried the Baron, letting his weapon fall. Stéphanie picked it up, but he snatched it out of her hands, caught the other pistol from the bench, and fled.

"Poor little one!" exclaimed the doctor, rejoicing that his stratagem had succeeded so well. He held her tightly to his heart as he went on. "He would have killed you, selfish that he is! He wants you to die because he is unhappy. He cannot learn to love you for your own sake, little one! We forgive him, do we not? He is senseless; you are only mad.

Never mind; God alone shall take you to Himself. We look upon you as unhappy because you no longer share our miseries, fools that we are! . . . Why, she is happy," he said, taking her on his knee; "nothing troubles her; she lives like the birds, like the deer——"

Stéphanie sprang upon a young blackbird that was hopping about, caught it with a little shriek of glee, twisted its neck, looked at the dead bird, and dropped it at the foot of a tree without giving it another thought.

The next morning at daybreak the colonel went out into the garden to look for Stéphanie; hope was very strong in him. He did not see her, and whistled; and when she came, he took her arm, and for the first time they walked together along an alley beneath the trees, while the fresh morning wind shook down the dead leaves about them. The colonel sat down, and Stéphanie, of her own accord, lit upon his knee. Philip trembled with gladness.

"Love!" he cried, covering her hands with passionate kisses, "I am Philip . . ."

She looked curiously at him.

"Come close," he added, as he held her tightly. "Do you feel the beating of my heart? It has beat for you, for you only. I love you always. Philip is not dead. He is here. You are sitting on his knee. You are my Stéphanie, I am your Philip!"

"Farewell!" she said, "farewell!"

The colonel shivered. He thought that some vibration of his highly wrought feeling had surely reached his beloved; that the heart-rending cry, drawn from him by hope, the utmost effort of a love that must last for ever, of passion in its ecstasy, striving to reach the soul of the woman he loved, must awaken her.

"Oh, Stéphanie! we shall be happy yet!"

A cry of satisfaction broke from her, a dim light of intelligence gleamed in her eyes.

"She knows me! . . . Stéphanie! . . ."

The colonel felt his heart swell, and tears gathered under

his eyelids. But all at once the Countess held up a bit of sugar for him to see; she had discovered it by searching diligently for it while he spoke. What he had mistaken for a human thought was a degree of reason required for a monkey's mischievous trick!

Philip fainted. M. Fanjat found the Countess sitting on his prostrate body. She was nibbling her bit of sugar, giving expression to her enjoyment by little grimaces and gestures that would have been thought clever in a woman in full possession of her senses if she tried to mimic her paroquet or her cat.

"Oh, my friend!" cried Philip, when he came to himself. "This is like death every moment of the day! I love her too much! I could bear anything if only through her madness she had kept some little trace of womanhood. But, day after day, to see her like a wild animal, not even a sense of modesty left, to see her——"

"So you must have a theatrical madness, must you?" said the doctor sharply, "and your prejudices are stronger than your lover's devotion? What, monsieur! I resign to you the sad pleasure of giving my niece her food, and the enjoyment of her playtime; I have kept for myself nothing but the most burdensome cares. I watch over her while you are asleep, I—— Go, monsieur, and give up the task. Leave this dreary hemitage; I can live with my little darling; I understand her disease; I study her movements; I know her secrets. Some day you shall thank me."

The colonel left the Minorite convent, that he was destined to see only once again. The doctor was alarmed by the effect that his words made upon his guest; his niece's lover became as dear to him as his niece. If either of them deserved to be pitied, that one was certainly Philip; did he not bear alone the burden of an appalling sorrow?

The doctor made inquiries, and learned that the hapless colonel had retired to a country house of his near Saint-Germain. A dream had suggested to him a plan for restoring the Countess to reason, and the doctor did not know that he

was spending the rest of the autumn in carrying out a vast scheme. A small stream ran through his park, and in winter time flooded a low-lying land, something like the plain on the eastern side of the Beresina. The village of Satout, on the slope of a ridge above it, bounded the horizon of a picture of desolation, something as Studzianka lay on the heights that shut in the swamp of the Beresina. The colonel set laborers to work to make a channel to resemble the greedy river that had swallowed up the treasures of France and Napoleon's army. By the help of his memories, Philip reconstructed on his own lands the bank where General Eblé had built his bridges. He drove in piles, and then set fire to them, so as to reproduce the charred and blackened balks of timber that on either side of the river told the stragglers that their retreat to France had been cut off. He had materials collected like the fragments out of which his comrades in misfortune had made the raft; his park was laid waste to complete the illusion on which his last hopes were founded. He ordered ragged uniforms and clothing for several hundred peasants. Huts and bivouacs and batteries were raised and burned down. In short, he omitted no device that could reproduce that most hideous of all scenes. He succeeded. When, in the earliest days of December, snow covered the earth with a thick white mantle, it seemed to him that he saw the Beresina itself. The mimic Russia was so startlingly real, that several of his old comrades recognized the scene of their past sufferings. M. de Sucy kept the secret of the drama to be enacted with this tragical background, but it was looked upon as a mad freak in several circles of society in Paris.

In the early days of the month of January 1820, the colonel drove over to the Forest of l'Isle-Adam in a carriage like the one in which M. and Mme. de Vandières had driven from Moscow to Studzianka. The horses closely resembled that other pair that he had risked his life to bring from the Russian lines. He himself wore the grotesque and soiled clothes, accoutrements, and cap that he had worn on the 29th of

November 1812. He had even allowed his hair and beard to grow, and neglected his appearance, that no detail might be lacking to recall the scene in all its horror.

"I guessed what you meant to do," cried M. Fanjat, when he saw the colonel dismount. "If you mean your plan to succeed, do not let her see you in that carriage. This evening I will give my niece a little laudanum, and while she sleeps, we will dress her in such clothes as she wore at Studzianka, and put her in your traveling-carriage. I will follow you in a berline."

Soon after two o'clock in the morning, the young Countess was lifted into the carriage, laid on the cushions, and wrapped in a coarse blanket. A few peasants held torches while this strange elopement was arranged.

A sudden cry rang through the silence of night, and Philip and the doctor, turning, saw Geneviève. She had come out half-dressed from the low room where she slept.

"Farewell, farewell; it is all over, farewell!" she called, crying bitterly.

"Why, Geneviève, what is it?" asked M. Fanjat.

Geneviève shook her head despairingly, raised her arm to heaven, looked at the carriage, uttered a long snarling sound, and with evident signs of profound terror, slunk in again.

"'Tis a good omen," cried the colonel. "The girl is sorry to lose her companion. Very likely she *sees* that Stéphanie is about to recover her reason."

"God grant it may be so!" answered M. Fanjat, who seemed to be affected by this incident. Since insanity had interested him, he had known several cases in which a spirit of prophecy and the gift of second sight had been accorded to a disordered brain—two faculties which many travelers tell us are also found among savage tribes.

So it happened that, as the colonel had foreseen and arranged, Stéphanie traveled across the mimic Beresina about nine o'clock in the morning, and was awakened by an explosion of rockets about a hundred paces from the scene of action. It was a signal. Hundreds of peasants raised a ter-

rible clamor, like the despairing shouts that startled the Russians when twenty thousand stragglers learned that by their own fault they were delivered over to death or to slavery.

When the Countess heard the report and the cries that followed, she sprang out of the carriage, and rushed in frenzied anguish over the snow-covered plain; she saw the burned bivouacs and the fatal raft about to be launched on a frozen Beresina. She saw Major Philip brandishing his sabre among the crowd. The cry that broke from Mme. de Vandières made the blood run cold in the veins of all who heard it. She stood face to face with the colonel, who watched her with a beating heart. At first she stared blankly at the strange scene about her, then she reflected. For an instant, brief as a lightning flash, there was the same quick gaze and total lack of comprehension that we see in the bright eyes of a bird; then she passed her hand across her forehead with the intelligent expression of a thinking being; she looked round on the memories that had taken substantial form, into the past life that had been transported into her present; she turned her face to Philip—and saw him! An awed silence fell upon the crowd. The colonel breathed hard, but dared not speak; tears filled the doctor's eyes. A faint color overspread Stéphanie's beautiful face, deepening slowly, till at last she glowed like a girl radiant with youth. Still the bright flush grew. Life and joy, kindled within her at the blaze of intelligence, swept through her like leaping flames. A convulsive tremor ran from her feet to her heart. But all these tokens, which flashed on the sight in a moment, gathered and gained consistence, as it were, when Stéphanie's eyes gleamed with heavenly radiance, the light of a soul within. She lived, she thought! She shuddered—was it with fear? God Himself unloosed a second time the tongue that had been bound by death, and set His fire anew in the extinguished soul. The electric torrent of the human will vivified the body whence it had so long been absent.

"Stéphanie!" the colonel cried.

"Oh! it is Philip!" said the poor Countess.

She fled to the trembling arms held out towards her, and the embrace of the two lovers frightened those who beheld it. Stéphanie burst into tears.

Suddenly the tears ceased to flow; she lay in his arms a dead weight, as if stricken by a thunderbolt, and said faintly:

"Farewell, Philip! . . . I love you. . . . farewell!"

"She is dead!" cried the colonel, unclasping his arms.

The old doctor received the lifeless body of his niece in his arms as a young man might have done; he carried her to a stack of wood and set her down. He looked at her face, and laid a feeble hand, tremulous with agitation, upon her heart—it beat no longer.

"Can it really be so?" he said, looking from the colonel, who stood there motionless, to Stéphanie's face. Death had invested it with a radiant beauty, a transient aureole, the pledge, it may be, of a glorious life to come.

"Yes, she is dead."

"Oh, but that smile!" cried Philip; "only see that smile. Is it possible?"

"She has grown cold already," answered M. Fanjat.

M. de Sucy made a few strides to tear himself from the sight; then he stopped, and whistled the air that the mad Stéphanie had understood; and when he saw that she did not rise and hasten to him, he walked away, staggering like a drunken man, still whistling, but he did not turn again.

In society General de Sucy is looked upon as very agreeable, and above all things, as very lively and amusing. Not very long ago a lady complimented him upon his good humor and equable temper.

"Ah! madame," he answered, "I pay very dearly for my merriment in the evening if I am alone."

"Then, you are never alone, I suppose."

"No," he answered, smiling.

If a keen observer of human nature could have seen the

look that Sucy's face wore at that moment, he would, without doubt, have shuddered.

"Why do you not marry?" the lady asked (she had several daughters of her own at a boarding-school). "You are wealthy; you belong to an old and noble house; you are clever; you have a future before you; everything smiles upon you."

"Yes," he answered; "one smile is killing me——"

On the morrow the lady heard with amazement that M. de Sucy had shot himself through the head that night.

The fashionable world discussed the extraordinary news in divers ways, and each had a theory to account for it; play, love, ambition, irregularities in private life, according to the taste of the speaker, explained the last act of the tragedy begun in 1812. Two men alone, a magistrate and an old doctor, knew that Monsieur le Comte de Sucy was one of those souls unhappy in the strength God gives to them to enable them to triumph daily in a ghastly struggle with a mysterious horror. If for a moment God withdraws His sustaining hand, they succumb.

PARIS, *March* 1830.

THE CONSCRIPT

[The inner self] . . . by a phenomenon of vision or of locomotion has been known at times to abolish Space in its two modes of Time and Distance—the one intellectual, the other physical.

—HISTORY OF LOUIS LAMBERT.

ON a November evening in the year 1793 the principal citizens of Carentan were assembled in Mme. de Dey's drawing-room. Mme. de Dey held this *reception* every night of the week, but an unwonted interest attached to this evening's gathering, owing to certain circumstances which would have passed altogether unnoticed in a great city, though in a small country town they excited the greatest curiosity. For two days before Mme. de Dey had not been at home to her visitors, and on the previous evening her door had been shut, on the ground of indisposition. Two such events at any ordinary time would have produced in Carentan the same sensation that Paris knows on nights when there is no performance at the theatres—existence is in some sort incomplete; but in those times when the least indiscretion on the part of an aristocrat might be a matter of life and death, this conduct of Mme. de Dey's was likely to bring about the most disastrous consequences for her. Her position in Carentan ought to be made clear, if the reader is to appreciate the expression of keen curiosity and cunning fanaticism on the countenances of these Norman citizens, and, what is of most importance, the part that the lady played among them. Many a one during the days of the Revolution has doubtless passed through a crisis as difficult as hers at that moment, and the sympathies of more than one reader will fill in all the coloring of the picture.

Mme. de Dey was the widow of a Lieutenant-General, a Knight of the Orders of Saint Michael and of the Holy Ghost. She had left the Court when the Emigration began, and taken refuge in the neighborhood of Carentan, where she had large estates, hoping that the influence of the Reign of Terror would be but little felt there. Her calculations, based on a thorough knowledge of the district, proved correct. The Revolution made little disturbance in Lower Normandy. Formerly, when Mme. de Dey had spent any time in the country, her circle of acquaintance had been confined to the noble families of the district; but now, from politic motives, she opened her house to the principal citizens and to the Revolutionary authorities of the town, endeavoring to touch and gratify their social pride without arousing either hatred or jealousy. Gracious and kindly, possessed of the indescribable charm that wins goodwill without loss of dignity or effort to pay court to any, she had succeeded in gaining universal esteem; the discreet warnings of exquisite tact enabled her to steer a difficult course among the exacting claims of this mixed society, without wounding the overweening self-love of parvenus on the one hand, or the susceptibilities of her old friends on the other.

She was about thirty-eight years of age, and still preserved, not the fresh, high-colored beauty of the Basse-Normandes, but a fragile loveliness of what may be called an aristocratic type. Her figure was lissome and slender, her features delicate and clearly cut; the pale face seemed to light up and live when she spoke; but there was a quiet and devout look in the great dark eyes, for all their graciousness of expression—a look that seemed to say that the springs of her life lay without her own existence.

In her early girlhood she had been married to an elderly and jealous soldier. Her false position in the midst of a gay Court had doubtless done something to bring a veil of sadness over a face that must once have been bright with the charms of quick-pulsed life and love. She had been compelled to set constant restraint upon her frank impulses and emotions

at an age when a woman feels rather than thinks, and the depths of passion in her heart had never been stirred. In this lay the secret of her greatest charm, a youthfulness of the inmost soul, betrayed at times by her face, and a certain tinge of innocent wistfulness in her ideas. She was reserved in her demeanor, but in her bearing and in the tones of her voice there was still something that told of girlish longings directed toward a vague future. Before very long the least susceptible fell in love with her, and yet stood somewhat in awe of her dignity and high-bred manner. Her great soul, strengthened by the cruel ordeals through which she had passed, seemed to set her too far above the ordinary level, and these men weighed themselves, and instinctively felt that they were found wanting. Such a nature demanded an exalted passion.

Moreover, Mme. de Dey's affections were concentrated in one sentiment—a mother's love for her son. All the happiness and joy that she had not known as a wife, she had found later in her boundless love for him. The coquetry of a mistress, the jealousy of a wife mingled with the pure and deep affection of a mother. She was miserable when they were apart, and nervous about him while he was away; she could never see enough of him, and lived through and for him alone. Some idea of the strength of this tie may be conveyed to the masculine understanding by adding that this was not only Mme. de Dey's only son, but all she had of kith or kin in the world, the one human being on earth bound to her by all the fears and hopes and joys of her life.

The late Comte de Dey was the last of his race, and she, his wife, was the sole heiress and descendant of her house. So worldly ambitions and family considerations as well as the noblest cravings of the soul, combined to heighten in the Countess a sentiment that is strong in every woman's heart. The child was all the dearer, because only with infinite care had she succeeded in rearing him to man's estate; medical science had predicted his death a score of times, but she had held fast to her presentiments and her hopes,

and had known the inexpressible joy of watching him pass safely through the perils of infancy, of seeing his constitution strengthen in spite of the decrees of the Faculty.

Thanks to her constant care, the boy had grown up and developed so favorably, that at twenty years of age he was regarded as one of the most accomplished gentlemen at the Court of Versailles. One final happiness that does not always crown a mother's efforts was hers—her son worshiped her; and between these two there was the deep sympathy of kindred souls. If they had not been bound to each other already by a natural and sacred tie, they would instinctively have felt for each other a friendship that is rarely met with between two men.

At the age of eighteen, the young Count had received an appointment as sub-lieutenant in a regiment of dragoons, and had made it a point of honor to follow the emigrant Princes into exile.

Then Mme. de Dey faced the dangers of her cruel position. She was rich, noble, and the mother of an Emigrant. With the one desire to look after her son's great fortune, she had denied herself the happiness of being with him; and when she read the rigorous laws in virtue of which the Republic was daily confiscating the property of Emigrants at Carentan, she congratulated herself on the courageous course that she had taken. Was she not keeping watch over the wealth of her son at the risk of her life? Later, when news came of the horrible executions ordered by the Convention, she slept, happy in the knowledge that her own treasure was in safety, out of reach of peril, far from the scaffolds of the Revolution. She loved to think that she had followed the best course, that she had saved her darling and her darling's fortunes; and to this secret thought she made such concessions as the misfortunes of the times demanded, without compromising her dignity or her aristocratic tenets, and enveloped her sorrows in reserve and mystery. She had foreseen the difficulties that would beset her at Carentan. Did she not tempt the scaffold by the very fact of going thither to take a prominent

place? Yet, sustained by a mother's courage, she succeeded in winning the affection of the poor, ministering without distinction to every one in trouble; and made herself necessary to the well-to-do, by providing amusements for them.

The procureur of the commune might be seen at her house, the mayor, the president of the "district," and the public prosecutor, and even the judges of the Revolutionary tribunals went there. The four first-named gentlemen were none of them married, and each paid court to her, in the hope that Mme. de Dey would take him for her husband, either from fear of making an enemy or from a desire to find a protector.

The public prosecutor, once an attorney at Caen, and the Countess' man of business, did what he could to inspire love by a system of devotion and generosity, a dangerous game of cunning! He was the most formidable of all her suitors. He alone knew the amount of the large fortune of his sometime client, and his fervor was inevitably increased by the cupidity of greed, and by the consciousness that he wielded an enormous power, the power of life and death in the district. He was still a young man, and, owing to the generosity of his behavior, Mme. de Dey was unable as yet to estimate him truly. But, in despite of the danger of matching herself against Norman cunning, she used all the craft and inventiveness that Nature has bestowed on women to play off the rival suitors one against another. She hoped, by gaining time, to emerge safe and sound from her difficulties at last; for at that time Royalists in the provinces flattered themselves with a hope, daily renewed, that the morrow would see the end of the Revolution—a conviction that proved fatal to many of them.

In spite of difficulties, the Countess had maintained her independence with considerable skill until the day, when, by an inexplicable want of prudence, she took occasion to close her salon. So deep and sincere was the interest that she inspired, that those who usually filled her drawing-room felt a lively anxiety when the news was spread; then, with the frank

curiosity characteristic of provincial manners, they went to inquire into the misfortune, grief, or illness that had befallen Mme. de Dey.

To all these questions, Brigitte, the housekeeper, answered with the same formula: her mistress was keeping her room, and would see no one, not even her own servants. The almost claustral lives of dwellers in small towns fosters a habit of analysis and conjectural explanation of the business of everybody else; so strong is it, that when every one had exclaimed over poor Mme. de Dey (without knowing whether the lady was overcome by joy or sorrow), each one began to inquire into the causes of her sudden seclusion.

"If she were ill, she would have sent for the doctor," said gossip number one; "now the doctor has been playing chess in my house all day. He said to me, laughing, that in these days there is only one disease, and that, unluckily, it is incurable."

The joke was hazarded discreetly. Women and men, elderly folk and young girls, forthwith betook themselves to the vast fields of conjecture. Every one imagined that there was some secret in it, and every head was busy with the secret. Next day the suspicions became malignant. Every one lives in public in a small town, and the womenkind were the first to find out that Brigitte had laid in an extra stock of provisions. The thing could not be disputed. Brigitte had been seen in the market-place betimes that morning, and, wonderful to relate, she had bought the one hare to be had. The whole town knew that Mme. de Dey did not care for game. The hare became a starting-point for endless conjectures.

Elderly gentlemen, taking their constitutional, noticed a sort of suppressed bustle in the Countess' house; the symptoms were the more apparent because the servants were at evident pains to conceal them. The man-servant was beating a carpet in the garden. Only yesterday no one would have remarked the fact, but to-day everybody began to build romances upon that harmless piece of household stuff. Every one had a version.

On the following day, that on which Mme. de Dey gave out that she was not well, the magnates of Carentan went to spend the evening at the mayor's brother's house. He was a retired merchant, a married man, a strictly honorable soul; every one respected him, and the Countess held him in high regard. There all the rich widow's suitors were fain to invent more or less probable fictions, each one thinking the while how to turn to his own advantage the secret that compelled her to compromise herself in such a manner.

The public prosecutor spun out a whole drama to bring Mme. de Dey's son to her house of a night. The mayor had a belief in a priest who had refused the oath, a refugee from La Vendée; but this left him not a little embarrassed how to account for the purchase of a hare on a Friday. The president of the district had strong leanings towards a Chouan chief, or a Vendean leader hotly pursued. Others voted for a noble escaped from the prisons of Paris. In short, one and all suspected that the Countess had been guilty of some piece of generosity that the law of those days defined as a crime, an offence that was like to bring her to the scaffold. The public prosecutor, moreover, said, in a low voice, that they must hush the matter up, and try to save the unfortunate lady from the abyss towards which she was hastening.

"If you spread reports about," he added, "I shall be obliged to take cognizance of the matter, and to search the house, and then! . . ."

He said no more, but every one understood what was left unsaid.

The Countess' real friends were so much alarmed for her, that on the morning of the third day the *Procureur Syndic* of the commune made his wife write a few lines to persuade Mme. de Dey to hold her reception as usual that evening. The old merchant took a bolder step. He called that morning upon the lady. Strong in the thought of the service he meant to do her, he insisted that he must see Mme. de Dey, and was amazed beyond expression to find her out in the garden, busy gathering the last autumn flowers in her borders to fill the vases.

"She has given refuge to her lover, no doubt," thought the old man, struck with pity for the charming woman before him.

The Countess' face wore a strange look, that confirmed his suspicions. Deeply moved by the devotion so natural to women, but that always touches us, because all men are flattered by the sacrifices that any woman makes for any one of them, the merchant told the Countess of the gossip that was circulating in the town, and showed her the danger that she was running. He wound up at last with saying that "if there are some of our public functionaries who are sufficiently ready to pardon a piece of heroism on your part so long as it is a priest that you wish to save, no one will show you any mercy if it is discovered that you are sacrificing yourself to the dictates of your heart."

At these words Mme. de Dey gazed at her visitor with a wild excitement in her manner that made him tremble, old though he was.

"Come in," she said, taking him by the hand to bring him to her room, and as soon as she had assured herself that they were alone, she drew a soiled, torn letter from her bodice.—"Read it!" she cried, with a violent effort to pronounce the words.

She dropped as if exhausted into her armchair. While the old merchant looked for his spectacles and wiped them, she raised her eyes, and for the first time looked at him with curiosity; then, in an uncertain voice, "I trust in you," she said softly.

"Why did I come but to share in your crime?" the old merchant said simply.

She trembled. For the first time since she had come to the little town her soul found sympathy in another soul. A sudden light dawned meantime on the old merchant; he understood the Countess' joy and her prostration.

Her son had taken part in the Granville expedition; he wrote to his mother from his prison, and the letter brought her a sad, sweet hope. Feeling no doubts as to his means of

escape, he wrote that within three days he was sure to reach her, disguised. The same letter that brought these weighty tidings was full of heart-rending farewells in case the writer should not be in Carentan by the evening of the third day, and he implored his mother to send a considerable sum of money by the bearer, who had gone through dangers innumerable to deliver it. The paper shook in the old man's hands.

"And to-day is the third day!" cried Mme. de Dey. She sprang to her feet, took back the letter, and walked up and down.

"You have set to work imprudently," the merchant remarked, addressing her. "Why did you buy provisions?"

"Why, he may come in dying of hunger, worn out with fatigue, and——" She broke off.

"I am sure of my brother," the old merchant went on; "I will engage him in your interests."

The merchant in this crisis recovered his old business shrewdness, and the advice that he gave Mme. de Dey was full of prudence and wisdom. After the two had agreed together as to what they were to do and say, the old merchant went on various ingenious pretexts to pay visits to the principal houses of Carentan, announcing wherever he went that he had just been to see Mme. de Dey, and that, in spite of her indisposition, she would receive that evening. Matching his shrewdness against Norman wits in the cross-examination he underwent in every family as to the Countess' complaint, he succeeded in putting almost every one who took an interest in the mysterious affair upon the wrong scent.

His very first call worked wonders. He told, in the hearing of a gouty old lady, how that Mme. de Dey had all but died of an attack of gout in the stomach; how that the illustrious Tronchin had recommended her in such a case to put the skin from a live hare on her chest, to stop in bed, and keep perfectly still. The Countess, he said, had lain in danger of her life for the past two days; but after carefully following out Tronchin's singular prescription, she was now sufficiently recovered to receive visitors that evening.

This tale had an immense success in Carentan. The local doctor, a Royalist *in petto,* added to its effect by gravely discussing the specific. Suspicion, nevertheless, had taken too deep root in a few perverse or philosophical minds to be entirely dissipated; so it fell out that those who had the right of entry into Mme. de Dey's drawing-room hurried thither at an early hour, some to watch her face, some out of friendship, but the more part attracted by the fame of the marvelous cure.

They found the Countess seated in a corner of the great chimney-piece in her room, which was almost as modestly furnished as similar apartments in Carentan; for she had given up the enjoyment of luxuries to which she had formerly been accustomed, for fear of offending the narrow prejudices of her guests, and she had made no changes in her house. The floor was not even polished. She had left the old sombre hangings on the walls, had kept the old-fashioned country furniture, burned tallow candles, had fallen in with the ways of the place and adopted provincial life without flinching before its cast-iron narrowness, its most disagreeable hardships; but knowing that her guests would forgive her for any prodigality that conduced to their comfort, she left nothing undone where their personal enjoyment was concerned; her dinners, for instance, were excellent. She even went so far as to affect avarice to recommend herself to these sordid natures; and had the ingenuity to make it appear that certain concessions to luxury had been made at the instance of others, to whom she had graciously yielded.

Towards seven o'clock that evening, therefore, the nearest approach to polite society that Carentan could boast was assembled in Mme. de Dey's drawing-room, in a wide circle, about the fire. The old merchant's sympathetic glances sustained the mistress of the house through this ordeal; with wonderful strength of mind, she underwent the curious scrutiny of her guests, and bore with their trivial prosings. Every time there was a knock at the door, at every sound of footsteps in the street, she hid her agitation by raising questions

of absorbing interest to the countryside. She led the conversation on to the burning topic of the quality of various ciders, and was so well seconded by her friend who shared her secret, that her guests almost forgot to watch her, and her face wore its wonted look; her self-possession was unshaken. The public prosecutor and one of the judges of the Revolutionary Tribunal kept silence, however; noting the slightest change that flickered over her features, listening through the noisy talk to every sound in the house. Several times they put awkward questions, which the Countess answered with wonderful presence of mind. So brave is a mother's heart!

Mme. de Dey had drawn her visitors into little groups, had made parties of whist, boston, or reversis, and sat talking with some of the young people; she seemed to be living completely in the present moment, and played her part like a consummate actress. She elicited a suggestion of loto, and saying that no one else knew where to find the game, she left the room.

"My good Brigitte, I cannot breathe down there!" she cried, brushing away the tears that sprang to her eyes that glittered with fever, sorrow, and impatience.—She had gone up to her son's room, and was looking round it. "He does not come," she said. "Here I can breathe and live. A few minutes more and he will be here, for he is alive, I am sure that he is alive! my heart tells me so. Do you hear nothing, Brigitte? Oh! I would give the rest of my life to know whether he is still in prison or tramping across the country. I would rather not think."

Once more she looked to see that everything was in order. A bright fire blazed on the hearth, the shutters were carefully closed, the furniture shone with cleanliness, the bed had been made after a fashion that showed that Brigitte and the Countess had given their minds to every trifling detail. It was impossible not to read her hopes in the dainty and thoughtful preparations about the room; love and a mother's tenderest caresses seemed to pervade the air in the scent of

flowers. None but a mother could have foreseen the requirements of a soldier and arranged so completely for their satisfaction. A dainty meal, the best of wine, clean linen, slippers—no necessary, no comfort, was lacking for the weary traveler, and all the delights of home heaped upon him should reveal his mother's love.

"Oh, Brigitte! . . ." cried the Countess, with a heart-rending inflection in her voice. She drew a chair to the table as if to strengthen her illusions and realize her longings.

"Ah, madame, he is coming. He is not far off. . . . I haven't a doubt that he is living and on his way," Brigitte answered. "I put a key in the Bible and held it on my fingers while Cottin read the Gospel of St. John, and the key did not turn, madame."

"Is that a certain sign?" the Countess asked.

"Why, yes, madame! everybody knows that. He is still alive; I would stake my salvation on it; God cannot be mistaken."

"If only I could see him here in the house, in spite of the danger."

"Poor Monsieur Auguste!" cried Brigitte; "I expect he is tramping along the lanes!"

"And that is eight o'clock striking now!" cried the Countess in terror.

She was afraid that she had been too long in the room where she felt sure that her son was alive; all those preparations made for him meant that he was alive. She went down, but she lingered a moment in the peristyle for any sound that might waken the sleeping echoes of the town. She smiled at Brigitte's husband, who was standing there on guard; the man's eyes looked stupid with the strain of listening to the faint sounds of the night. She stared into the darkness, seeing her son in every shadow everywhere; but it was only for a moment. Then she went back to the drawing-room with an assumption of high spirits, and began to play at loto with the little girls. But from time to time she complained of feeling unwell, and went to sit in her great chair by the

fireside. So things went in Mme. de Dey's house and in the minds of those beneath her roof.

Meanwhile, on the road from Paris to Cherbourg, a young man, dressed in the inevitable brown *carmagnole* of those days, was plodding his way towards Carentan. When the first levies were made, there was little or no discipline kept up. The exigencies of the moment scarcely admitted of soldiers being equipped at once, and it was no uncommon thing to see the roads thronged with conscripts in their ordinary clothes. The young fellows went ahead of their company to the next halting-place, or lagged behind it; it depended upon their fitness to bear the fatigues of a long march. This particular wayfarer was some considerable way in advance of a company of conscripts on the way to Cherbourg, whom the mayor was expecting to arrive every hour, for it was his duty to distribute their billets. The young man's footsteps were still firm as he trudged along, and his bearing seemed to indicate that he was no stranger to the rough life of a soldier. The moon shone on the pasture-land about Carentan, but he had noticed great masses of white cloud that were about to scatter showers of snow over the country, and doubtless the fear of being overtaken by a storm had quickened his pace in spite of his weariness.

The wallet on his back was almost empty, and he carried a stick in his hand, cut from one of the high, thick box-hedges that surround most of the farms in Lower Normandy. As the solitary wayfarer came into Carentan, the gleaming moonlit outlines of the towers stood out for a moment with ghostly effect against the sky. He met no one in the silent streets that rang with the echoes of his own footsteps, and was obliged to ask the way to the mayor's house of a weaver who was working late. The magistrate was not far to seek, and in a few minutes the conscript was sitting on a stone bench in the mayor's porch waiting for his billet. He was sent for, however, and confronted with that functionary, who scrutinized him closely. The foot-soldier was a good-looking young man, who appeared to be of gentle birth. There was

something aristocratic in his bearing, and signs in his face of intelligence developed by a good education.

"What is your name?" asked the mayor, eyeing him shrewdly.

"Julien Jussieu," answered the conscript.

"From?——" queried the official, and an incredulous smile stole over his features.

"From Paris."

"Your comrades must be a good way behind?" remarked the Norman in sarcastic tones.

"I am three leagues ahead of the battalion."

"Some sentiment attracts you to Carentan, of course, citizen-conscript," said the mayor astutely. "All right, all right!" he added, with a wave of the hand, seeing that the young man was about to speak. "We know where to send you. There, off with you, *Citizen Jussieu,*" and he handed over the billet.

There was a tinge of irony in the stress the magistrate laid on the last two words while he held out a billet on Mme. de Dey. The conscript read the direction curiously.

"He knows quite well that he has not far to go, and when he gets outside he will very soon cross the market-place," said the mayor to himself, as the other went out. "He is uncommonly bold! God guide him! . . . He has an answer ready for everything. Yes, but if somebody else had asked to see his papers it would have been all up with him!"

The clocks in Carentan struck half-past nine as he spoke. Lanterns were being lit in Mme. de Dey's ante-chamber, servants were helping their masters and mistresses into sabots, greatcoats, and calashes. The card-players settled their accounts, and everybody went out together, after the fashion of all little country towns.

"It looks as if the prosecutor meant to stop," said a lady, who noticed that that important personage was not in the group in the market-place, where they all took leave of one another before going their separate ways home. And, as a

matter of fact, that redoubtable functionary was alone with the Countess, who waited trembling till he should go. There was something appalling in their long silence.

"Citoyenne," said he at last, "I am here to see that the laws of the Republic are carried out——"

Mme. de Dey shuddered.

"Have you nothing to tell me?"

"Nothing!" she answered, in amazement.

"Ah! madame," cried the prosecutor, sitting down beside her and changing his tone. "At this moment, for lack of a word, one of us—you or I—may carry our heads to the scaffold. I have watched your character, your soul, your manner, too closely to share the error into which you have managed to lead your visitors to-night. You are expecting your son, I could not doubt it."

The Countess made an involuntary sign of denial, but her face had grown white and drawn with the struggle to maintain the composure that she did not feel, and no tremor was lost on the merciless prosecutor.

"Very well," the Revolutionary official went on, "receive him; but do not let him stay under your roof after seven o'clock to-morrow morning; for to-morrow, as soon as it is light, I shall come with a denunciation that I will have made out, and——"

She looked at him, and the dull misery in her eyes would have softened a tiger.

"I will make it clear that the denunciation was false by making a thorough search," he went on in a gentle voice; "my report shall be such that you will be safe from any subsequent suspicion. I shall make mention of your patriotic gifts, your civism, and *all* of us will be safe."

Mme. de Dey, fearful of a trap, sat motionless, her face afire, her tongue frozen. A knock at the door rang through the house.

"Oh! . . ." cried the terrified mother, falling upon her knees; "save him! save him!"

"Yes, let us save him!" returned the public prosecutor, and his eyes grew bright as he looked at her, "if it costs *us* our lives!"

"Lost!" she wailed. The prosecutor raised her politely.

"Madame," said he with a flourish of eloquence, "to your own free will alone would I owe——"

"Madame, he is——" cried Brigitte, thinking that her mistress was alone. At the sight of the public prosecutor, the old servant's joy-flushed countenance became haggard and impassive.

"Who is it, Brigitte?" the prosecutor asked kindly, as if he too were in the secret of the household.

"A conscript that the mayor has sent here for a night's lodging," the woman replied, holding out the billet.

"So it is," said the prosecutor, when he had read the slip of paper. "A battalion is coming here to-night."

And he went.

The Countess' need to believe in the faith of her sometime attorney was so great, that she dared not entertain any suspicion of him. She fled upstairs; she felt scarcely strength enough to stand; she opened the door, and sprang, half-dead with fear, into her son's arms.

"Oh! my child! my child!" she sobbed, covering him with almost frenzied kisses.

"Madame! . . ." said a stranger's voice.

"Oh! it is not he!" she cried, shrinking away in terror, and she stood face to face with the conscript, gazing at him with haggard eyes.

"*O saint bon Dieu!* how like he is!" cried Brigitte.

There was silence for a moment; even the stranger trembled at the sight of Mme. de Dey's face.

"Ah! monsieur," she said, leaning on the arm of Brigitte's husband, feeling for the first time the full extent of a sorrow that had all but killed her at its first threatening; "ah! monsieur, I cannot stay to see you any longer . . . permit my servants to supply my place, and to see that you have all that you want."

She went down to her own room, Brigitte and the old serving-man half carrying her between them. The housekeeper set her mistress in a chair, and broke out:

"What, madame! is that man to sleep in Monsieur Auguste's bed, and wear Monsieur Auguste's slippers, and eat the pasty that I made for Monsieur Auguste? Why, if they were to guillotine me for it, I——"

"Brigitte!" cried Mme. de Dey.

Brigitte said no more.

"Hold your tongue, chatterbox," said her husband, in a low voice; "do you want to kill madame?"

A sound came from the conscript's room as he drew his chair to the table.

"I shall not stay here," cried Mme. de Dey; "I shall go into the conservatory; I shall hear better there if any one passes in the night."

She still wavered between the fear that she had lost her son and the hope of seeing him once more. That night was hideously silent. Once, for the Countess, there was an awful interval, when the battalion of conscripts entered the town, and the men went by, one by one, to their lodgings. Every footfall, every sound in the street, raised hopes to be disappointed; but it was not for long, the dreadful quiet succeeded again. Towards morning the Countess was forced to return to her room. Brigitte, ever keeping watch over her mistress' movements, did not see her come out again; and when she went, she found the Countess lying there dead.

"I expect she heard that conscript," cried Brigitte, "walking about Monsieur Auguste's room, whistling that accursed *Marseillaise* of theirs while he dressed, as if he had been in a stable! That must have killed her."

But it was a deeper and a more solemn emotion, and doubtless some dreadful vision, that had caused Mme. de Dey's death; for at the very hour when she died at Carentan, her son was shot in le Morbihan.

This tragical story may be added to all the instances on record of the workings of sympathies uncontrolled by the laws of time and space. These observations, collected with scientific curiosity by a few isolated individuals, will one day serve as documents on which to base the foundations of a new science which hitherto has lacked its man of genius.

PARIS, *February* 1831.